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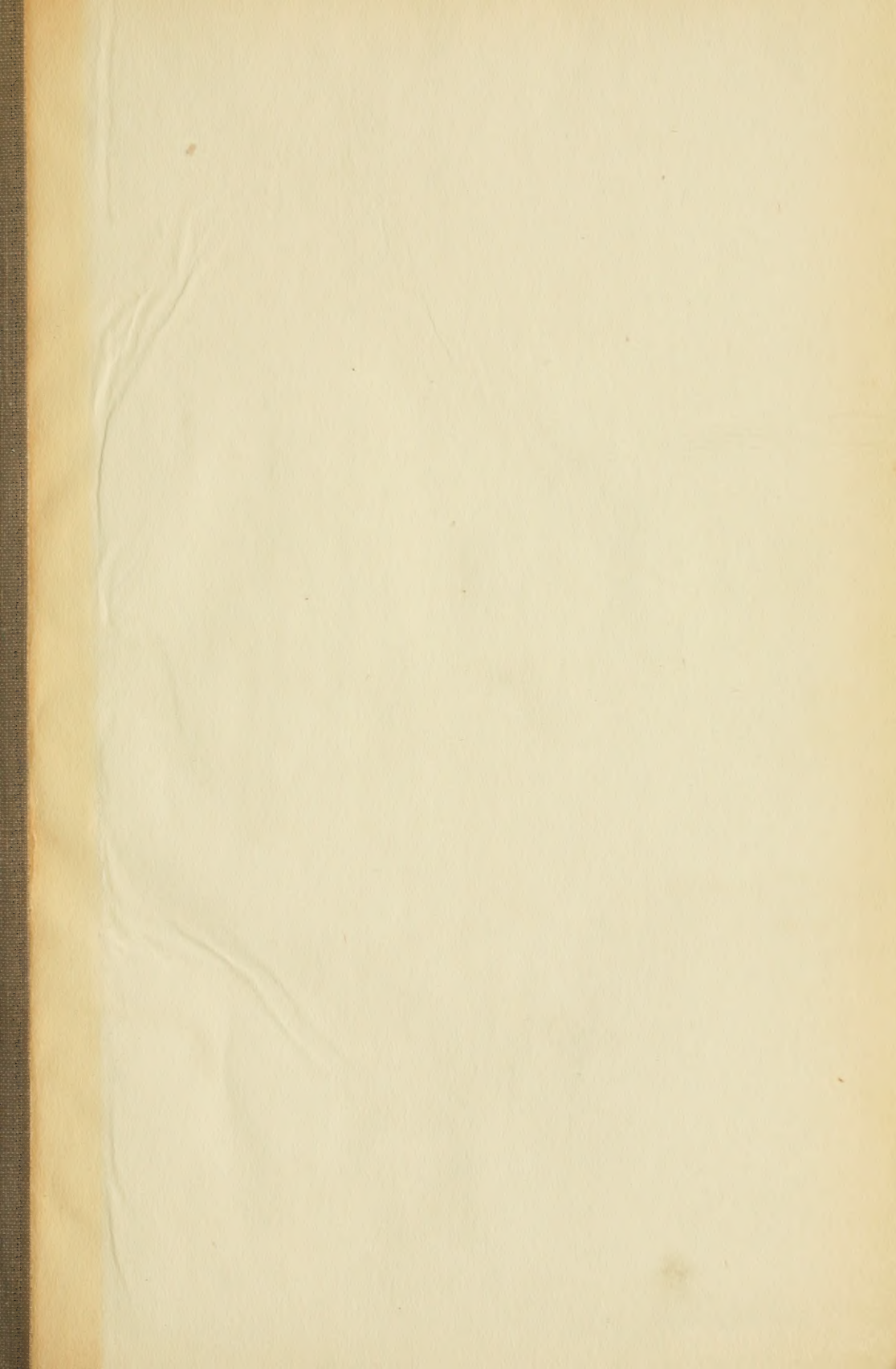


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THE BRONTËS

LIFE AND LETTERS

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*Mrs. Gaskell*  
*from the portrait by George Richmond, R.A.*

*Emery Walker Ph. Sc.*





# THE BRONTËS

## LIFE AND LETTERS

BEING AN ATTEMPT TO PRESENT A FULL  
AND FINAL RECORD OF THE LIVES OF  
THE THREE SISTERS, CHARLOTTE, EMILY  
AND ANNE BRONTË FROM THE BIOGRA-  
PHIES OF MRS. GASKELL AND OTHERS,  
AND FROM NUMEROUS HITHERTO UN-  
PUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS AND LETTERS

BY

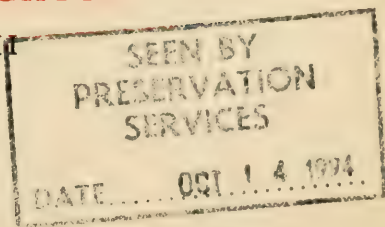
CLEMENT SHORTER



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## CHAPTER XIX

### THE DEATH OF EMILY BRONTË

EMILY BRONTË is the sphinx of our modern literature. She came into being in the family of an obscure clergyman, and she went out of it at thirty years of age without leaving behind her one single significant record which was any key to her character or to her mode of thought, save only the one famous novel, *Wuthering Heights*, and a few poems—some three or four of which will live in our poetic anthologies for ever. And she made no single friend other than her sister Anne. With Anne she must have corresponded during the two or three periods of her life when she was separated from that much-loved sister; and we may be sure that the correspondence was of a singularly affectionate character. Charlotte, who never came very near to her in thought or sympathy, although she loved her younger sister so deeply, addressed her in one letter as 'mine bonnie love'; and it is certain that her own letters to her two sisters, and particularly to Anne, must have been peculiarly tender and in no way lacking in abundant self-revelation. When Emily and Anne had both gone to the grave, Charlotte, it is probable, carefully destroyed every scrap of their correspondence, and, indeed, of their literary effects that she could find; and thus it is that, apart from her books and certain fragments, we know Emily only by two formal letters to her sister's friend. Beyond these there is not one scrap of information as to Emily's outlook upon life. In infancy she was with Charlotte at Cowan Bridge, and



was described by the governess as 'a pretty little thing.' For three months she was at Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head; but there, unlike Charlotte, she made no friends. She and Anne were inseparable when at home, but of what they said to one another there is no record. The sisters must have differed in many ways. Anne, gentle and persuasive, grew up like Charlotte, devoted to the Christianity of her father and mother, and entirely in harmony with all the conditions of a parsonage. It is impossible to think that the author of 'The Old Stoic' and 'Last Lines' was equally attached to the creeds of the churches; but what Emily thought on religious subjects the world will never know. Mrs. Gaskell put to Miss Nussey this very question: 'What was Emily's religion?' But Emily was the last person in the world to have spoken to the most friendly of visitors about so important a theme. For a short time, as we know, Emily was in a school at Law Hill near Halifax—a Miss Patchet's. She was, for a still longer period, at the Héger Pensionnat at Brussels. Mrs. Gaskell's business was to write the life of Charlotte Brontë and not of her sister Emily; and as a result there is little enough of Emily in Mrs. Gaskell's book—no record of the Halifax and Brussels life as seen through Emily's eyes. Time, however, has brought its revenge. The cult which started with Mr. Sydney Dobell, and found poetic expression in Mr. Matthew Arnold's fine lines on her,

'Whose soul  
Knew no fellow for might,  
Passion, vehemence, grief,  
Daring, since Byron died,'<sup>1</sup>

culminated in an enthusiastic eulogy by Mr. Swinburne, who placed her in the very forefront of English women of genius.

I have said that there are no records of Emily, but

<sup>1</sup> *Haworth Churchyard, April 1855*, by Matthew Arnold. Macmillan and Co.

there are the two scraps of 'Diary' that are published in their chronological order, and there are also a few fragments, all written in that tiny handwriting which the girls affected, and bearing various dates from 1833 to 1840. A new edition of Emily's poems should, by virtue of these verses, have a great interest for her admirers.<sup>1</sup> With all her gifts as a poet, however, it is by *Wuthering Heights* that Emily Brontë is best known to the world; and the weirdness and force of that book suggest an inquiry concerning the influences which produced it. Dr. Wright, in his entertaining book *The Brontës in Ireland*, recounts the story of Patrick Brontë's origin, and insists that it was in listening to her father's anecdotes of his own Irish experiences that Emily obtained the weird material of *Wuthering Heights*. It is not, of course, enough to point out that Dr. Wright's story of the Irish Brontës is full of contradictions. A number of tales picked up at random from an illiterate peasantry might very well abound in inconsistencies, and yet contain some measure of truth. But nothing in Dr. Wright's narrative is confirmed, save only the fact that Patrick Brontë continued throughout his life in some slight measure of correspondence with his brothers and sisters—a fact rendered sufficiently evident by a perusal of his will. Dr. Wright tells of many visits to Ireland in order to trace the Brontë traditions to their source; and yet he had not—in his first edition—marked the elementary fact that the registry of births in County Down records the existence of innumerable Bruntys and of not a single Brontë. Dr. Wright probably made his inquiries with the stories of Emily and Charlotte well in mind. He sought for similar traditions, and the quick-witted Irish peasantry gave him all that he wanted. They served up and embellished the current traditions of the neighbour-

<sup>1</sup> See *The Complete Poems* by Emily Brontë, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll and Clement Shorter, published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1908.

hood for his benefit, as the peasantry do everywhere for folklore enthusiasts. Charlotte Brontë's uncle Hugh, we are told, read the *Quarterly Review* article upon *Jane Eyre*, and, armed with a shillelagh, came to England, in order to wreak vengeance upon the writer of the bitter attack. He landed at Liverpool, walked from Liverpool to Haworth, saw his nieces, who 'gathered round him,' and listened to his account of his mission. He then went to London and made abundant inquiries—but why pursue this ludicrous story further? In the first place, the *Quarterly Review* article was published in December 1848—after Emily was dead, and while Anne was dying. Very soon after the review appeared Charlotte was informed of its authorship, and references to Miss Rigby and the *Quarterly* are found more than once in her correspondence with Mr. Williams.

This is a lengthy digression from the story of Emily's life, but it is of moment to discover whether there is any evidence of influences other than those which her Yorkshire home afforded. I have discussed the matter with Miss Ellen Nussey, and with Mr. Nicholls. Miss Nussey never, in all her visits to Haworth, heard a single reference to the Irish legends related by Dr. Wright, and firmly believed them to be mythical. Mr. Nicholls, during the six years that he lived alone at the parsonage with his father-in-law, never heard one single word from Mr. Brontë—who was by no means disposed to reticence—about these stories, and was also of opinion that they were purely legendary.

It has been suggested that Emily would have been guilty almost of a crime to have based the more sordid part of her narrative upon her brother's transgressions. This is sheer nonsense. She wrote *Wuthering Heights* because she was impelled thereto, and the book, with all its morbid force and fire, will remain, for all time, as a monument of the most striking genius that nineteenth-



century womanhood has given us. It was partly her life in Yorkshire—the local colour was mainly derived from her brief experience as a governess at Halifax—but it was partly, also, I am inclined to believe, the German fiction which she had devoured during the Brussels period, that inspired *Wuthering Heights*, although of this there is no real evidence.<sup>1</sup>

Emily Brontë's life-story has been told by a latter-day writer of genius. But Miss Mary F. Robinson's little book<sup>2</sup> was written under great difficulties. She had access to no material other than that contained in the printed volumes. Some scraps of new information she did indeed obtain from the recollections of Miss Ellen Nussey and others who were then alive to remember the Brontë family. Miss Robinson built up a theory that Emily was more long-suffering, more tolerant of Branwell's continued viciousness than were her sisters. Yet in quoting a letter that Charlotte wrote to Miss Nussey on her return from a visit to Brookroyd she did not know that the '——' in the following sentence referred to Emily:—

<sup>1</sup> The most effective reply to Dr. Wright's book that I have seen was published in *The Westminster Review* for October 1895. The author, the late Rev. Angus Mackay, emphasised with effect the inconsistencies in Dr. Wright's account of the Brontë ancestry; and concerning the suggestion that Emily founded *Wuthering Heights* upon certain Irish family traditions, has the following pregnant remarks:—"The truth-loving Charlotte's account of the matter must necessarily be final. She might blamelessly have kept silence about the origin of *Wuthering Heights*, but she would never have deliberately misled us; and she tells us distinctly in her preface to her sister's book that the materials of *Wuthering Heights* were gathered in Yorkshire. Speaking of Emily's aloofness from all her neighbours, she says: "Yet she knew them; knew their ways, their language, their family histories; she could hear of them with interest, and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic, and accurate; but with them she rarely exchanged a word. Hence it ensued that what her mind had gathered of the real concerning them was too exclusively confined to those tragic and terrible traits of which, in listening to the secret annals of every rude vicinage, the memory is sometimes compelled to receive the impress. Her imagination, which was a spirit more sombre than sunny, more powerful than sportive, found in such traits material whence it wrought creations like Heathcliff, like Earnshaw, like Catherine." To all who really know Charlotte's character this is conclusive and final. Had both plot and characters been derived from the history of an ancestor these words would never have been written."

<sup>2</sup> *Emily Brontë*, by A. Mary F. Robinson. The Eminent Women Series, edited by John H. Ingram. W. H. Allen and Co., 1889.

I hear that he got a sovereign while I have been away, under pretence of paying a pressing debt; he went immediately and changed it at a public-house, and has employed it as was to be expected. — concluded her account by saying that he was 'a hopeless being.'

The fact is that Branwell's state at that time was such that Emily, being only human, could not possibly have been more tolerant—and rightly so—than her two sisters. Yet Miss Robinson's account is worth quoting, the more especially as it contains an episode not treated elsewhere. Possibly the story was invented after *Jane Eyre* was written, but we will hope it is true:—

There was one woman's heart strong enough in its compassion to bear the daily disgusts, weaknesses, sins of Branwell's life, and yet persist in aid and affection. Night after night, when Mr. Brontë was in bed, when Anne and Charlotte had gone upstairs to their room, Emily still sat up waiting. She often had very long to wait in the silent house before the staggering tread, the muttered oath, the fumbling hand at the door, bade her rouse herself from her sad thoughts and rise to let in the prodigal, and lead him in safety to his rest. But she never wearied in her kindness. In that silent home, it was the silent Emily who had ever a cheering word for Branwell; it was Emily who still remembered that he was her brother, without that remembrance freezing her heart to numbness. She still hoped to win him back by love; and the very force and sincerity of his guilty passion (an additional horror and sin in her sister's eyes) was a claim on Emily, ever sympathetic to violent feeling. Thus it was she who, more than the others, became familiarised with the agony, and doubts, and shame of that tormented soul; and if, in her little knowledge of the world, she imagined such wrested passions to be natural, it is not upon her, of a certainty, that the blame of her pity shall be laid.

As the time went on and Branwell grew worse and wilder, it was well for the lonely watcher that she was strong. At last he grew ill, and would be content to go to bed early and lie there half-stupefied with opium and drink. One such night, their father and Branwell being in bed, the sisters came upstairs to

sleep. Emily had gone on first into the little passage room where she still slept, when Charlotte, passing Branwell's partly-opened door, saw a strange bright flare inside. 'Oh, Emily!' she cried, 'the house is on fire!'

Emily came out, her fingers at her lips. She had remembered her father's great horror of fire; it was the one dread of a brave man: he would have no muslin curtains, no light dresses in his house. She came out silently and saw the flame; then, very white and determined, dashed from her room downstairs into the passage, where every night full pails of water stood. One in each hand she came upstairs. Anne, Charlotte, the young servant, shrinking against the wall, huddled together in amazed horror—Emily went straight on and entered the blazing room. In a short while the bright light ceased to flare. Fortunately the flame had not reached the woodwork: drunken Branwell, turning in his bed, must have upset the light on to his sheets, for they and the bed were all on fire, and he unconscious in the midst when Emily went in, even as Jane Eyre found Mr. Rochester. But it was with no reasonable, thankful human creature with whom Emily had to deal. After a few long moments, those still standing in the passage saw her stagger out, white, with singed clothes, half-carrying in her arms, half-dragging, her besotted brother. She placed him in her bed and took away the light; then assuring the hysterical girls that there could be no further danger, she bade them go and rest—but where she slept herself that night no one remembers now.

## Letter 315

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*November 23rd, '48.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Whatever my inclination may be to let all correspondence alone for the present, I feel that to *you* at least I ought to write a line. I told you Emily was ill, in my last letter. She has not rallied yet. She is *very* ill. I believe, if you were to see her, your impression would be that there is no hope. A more hollow, wasted, pallid aspect I have not beheld. The deep, tight cough continues; the breathing after the least exertion is a rapid pant; and these symptoms are accompanied by pains in the chest and side. Her pulse, the only time she allowed it to be felt, was found to beat 115 per minute. In this state she resolutely



refuses to see a doctor; she will not give an explanation of her feelings, she will scarcely allow her illness to be alluded to. Our position is, and has been for some weeks, exquisitely painful. God only knows how all this is to terminate. More than once, I have been forced boldly to regard the terrible event of her loss as possible and even probable. But nature shrinks from such thoughts. I think Emily seems the nearest thing to my heart in this world. Miss Mary Robinson is just married to Mr. H. Clapham, a relation of the Sugdens. Mrs. Robinson is now Lady Scott. Her daughters say she is in the highest spirits. Write to me soon, dear Ellen, and believe me,  
yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

### Letter 316

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

[Undated.]

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I mentioned your coming here to Emily as a mere suggestion, with the faint hope that the prospect might cheer her, as she really esteems you perhaps more than any other person out of this house. I found, however, it would not do; any, the slightest excitement or putting out of the way is not to be thought of, and indeed I do not think the journey in this unsettled weather, with the walk from Keighley and walk back, at all advisable for yourself. Yet I should have liked to see you, and so would Anne. Emily continues much the same; yesterday I thought her a little better, but to-day she is not so well. I hope still—for I *must* hope—she is dear to me as life—if I let the faintness of despair reach my heart I shall become worthless. The attack was, I believe, in the first place, inflammation of the lungs; it ought to have been met promptly in time. She is too intractable. I *do* wish I knew her state and feelings more clearly. The fever is not so high as it was, but the pain in the side, the cough, the emaciation are there still.

Take *care* of yourself, dear Ellen, for the sake of all who have any affection for you. I believe these influenza colds are most insidious things. I think I scarcely need make a reference to the absurd rumour about the fortune, etc. In what it had its rise I do not know. I am not aware that we have a relation in the world in a position to leave a handsome fortune to anybody. I think

you must have been mistaken in saying that the Miss Woolers spread so groundless a report, they are not such gossips.

Remember me kindly to all at Brookroyd, and believe me,  
yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 317

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*December 7th, 1848.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I duly received Dr. Curie's work on Homœopathy, and ought to apologise for having forgotten to thank you for it. I will return it when I have given it a more attentive perusal than I have yet had leisure to do. My sister has read it, but as yet she remains unshaken in her former opinion: she will not admit there can be efficacy in such a system. Were I in her place, it appears to me that I should be glad to give it a trial, confident that it can scarcely do harm and might do good.

I can give no favourable report of Emily's state. My father is very despondent about her. Anne and I cherish hope as well as we can, but her appearance and her symptoms tend to crush that feeling. Yet I argue that the present emaciation, cough, weakness, shortness of breath are the results of inflammation, now, I trust, subsided, and that with time these ailments will gradually leave her. But my father shakes his head and speaks of others of our family once similarly afflicted, for whom he likewise persisted in hoping against hope, and who are now removed where hope and fear fluctuate no more. There were, however, differences between their case and hers—important differences I think. I must cling to the expectation of her recovery, I cannot renounce it.

Much would I give to have the opinion of a skilful professional man. It is easy, my dear sir, to say there is nothing in medicine, and that physicians are useless, but we naturally wish to procure aid for those we love when we see them suffer; most painful is it to sit still, look on, and do nothing. Would that my sister added to her many great qualities the humble one of tractability! I have again and again incurred her displeasure by urging the necessity of seeking advice, and I fear I must yet incur it again and again. Let me leave the subject; I have no right thus to make you a sharer in our sorrow.

I am indeed surprised that Mr. Newby should say that he is to publish another work by Ellis and Acton Bell. Acton has had quite enough of him. I think I *have* before intimated that that author never more intends to have Mr. Newby for a publisher. Not only does he seem to forget that engagements made should be fulfilled, but by a system of petty and contemptible manœuvring he throws an air of charlatanry over the works of which he has the management. This does not suit the 'Bells': they have their own rude north-country ideas of what is delicate, honourable, and gentlemanlike.

Newby's conduct in no sort corresponds with these notions; they have found him—I will not say what they have found him. Two words that would exactly suit him are at my pen point, but I shall not take the trouble to employ them.

Ellis Bell is at present in no condition to trouble himself with thoughts either of writing or publishing. Should it please Heaven to restore his health and strength, he reserves to himself the right of deciding whether or not Mr. Newby has forfeited every claim to his second work.

I have not yet read the second number of *Pendennis*. The first I thought rich in indication of ease, resource, promise; but it is not Thackeray's way to develop his full power all at once. *Vanity Fair* began very quietly—it was quiet all through, but the stream as it rolled gathered a resistless volume and force. Such, I doubt not, will be the case with *Pendennis*.

You must forget what I said about Eliza Lynn. She may be the best of human beings, and I am but a narrow-minded fool to express prejudice against a person I have never seen.

Believe me, my dear sir, in haste, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 318

TO W. S. WILLIAMS,

*December 3rd, 1848.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Your letter seems to relieve me from a difficulty and to open my way. I know it would be useless to consult Drs. Elliotson or Forbes: my sister would not see the most skilful physician in England if he were brought to her just now, nor would she follow his prescription. With regard to Homœopathy, she has at least admitted that it cannot do



much harm; perhaps if I get the medicines she may consent to try them; at any rate, the experiment shall be made.

Not knowing Dr. Epps's address, I send the enclosed statement of her case through your hands.<sup>1</sup>

I deeply feel both your kindness and Mr. Smith's in thus interesting yourselves in what touches me so nearly.—Believe me, yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 319

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*December 10th, 1848.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I hardly know what to say to you about the subject which now interests me the most keenly of anything in this world, for, in truth, I hardly know what to think myself. Hope and fear fluctuate daily. The pain in her side and chest is better; the cough, the shortness of breath, the extreme emaciation continue. Diarrhœa commenced nearly a fortnight ago, and continues still. Of course it greatly weakens her, but she thinks herself it tends to good, and I hope so. I have endured, however, such tortures of uncertainty on this subject that

<sup>1</sup> It runs thus:—

*December 9th, 1848.*

The patient, respecting whose case Dr. Epps is consulted, and for whom his opinion and advice are requested, is a female in her 31st year. A peculiar reserve of character renders it difficult to draw from her all the symptoms of her malady, but as far as they can be ascertained they are as follows:—

Her appetite failed; she evinced a continual thirst, with a craving for acids, and required a constant change of beverage. In appearance she grew rapidly emaciated; her pulse—the only time she allowed it to be felt—was found to be 115 per minute. The patient usually appeared worse in the forenoon, she was then frequently exhausted and drowsy; toward evening she often seemed better.

Expectoration accompanies the cough. The shortness of breath is aggravated by the slightest exertion. The patient's sleep is supposed to be tolerably good at intervals, but disturbed by paroxysms of coughing. Her resolution to contend against illness being very fixed, she has never consented to lie in bed for a single day—she sits up from 7 in the morning till 10 at night. All medical aid she has rejected, insisting that Nature should be left to take her own course. She has taken no medicine, but occasionally a mild aperient and Locock's cough wafers, of which she has used about 3 per diem, and considers their effect rather beneficial. Her diet, which she regulates herself, is very simple and light.

The patient has hitherto enjoyed pretty good health, though she has never looked strong, and the family constitution is not supposed to be robust. Her temperament is highly nervous. She has been accustomed to a sedentary and studious life.

If Dr. Epps can, from what has here been stated, give an opinion on the case and prescribe a course of treatment, he will greatly oblige the patient's friends.

Address—Miss Brontë, Parsonage, Haworth, Bradford, Yorks.

at length I could endure it no longer; and as her repugnance to seeing a medical man continues immutable—as she declares ‘no poisoning doctor’ shall come near her, I have written, unknown to her, to an eminent physician in London, giving as minute a statement of her case and symptoms as I could draw up, and requesting an opinion. I expect an answer in a day or two. I am thankful to say, that my own health at present is very tolerable. It is well such is the case; for Anne, with the best will in the world to be useful, is really too delicate to do or bear much. She, too, at present, has frequent pains in the side. Papa is also pretty well, though Emily’s state renders him very anxious. The Robinsons were here about a week ago. They are attractive and stylish-looking girls. They seemed overjoyed to see Anne; when I went into the room, they were clinging round her like two children—she, meantime, looking perfectly quiet and passive. You ask news of Mary Taylor, I might rather demand tidings of you, it is very long indeed since I heard from or of her. I have not received any intelligence from Hunsworth since the day Joe and Harry took it into their heads to come here. I think it probable offence was taken on that occasion, from what cause I know not; and as, if such be the case, the grudge must rest on purely imaginary grounds, and since, besides, I have other things to think about, my mind rarely dwells on the subject. If Emily were but well, I feel as if I should not care who neglected, misunderstood, or abused me. I would rather *you* were not of the number either. The crab-cheese arrived safely. Emily has just reminded me to thank you for it; it looks very nice. I wish she were well enough to eat it. With sincere regards to all at Brookroyd.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 320

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*Tuesday, December 19th, 1848.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I should have written to you before, if I had had one word of hope to say; but I had not. She grows daily weaker. The physician’s opinion was expressed too obscurely to be of use. He sent some medicine which she would not take. Moments so dark as these I have never known. I pray for God’s support to us all. Hitherto He has granted it.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

The last chapter of Emily's pathetic life we have in the words of Charlotte as told to the public in that memorable Introduction to *Wuthering Heights* :—

But a great change approached. Affliction came in that shape which to anticipate is dread, to look back on grief. In the very heat and burden of the day the labourers failed over their work. My sister Emily first declined. . . . Never in all her life had she lingered over any task that lay before her, and she did not linger now. She sank rapidly. She made haste to leave us. . . . Day by day, when I saw with what a front she met suffering, I looked on her with an anguish of wonder and love. I have seen nothing like it ; but, indeed, I have never seen her parallel in anything. Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone. The awful point was that, while full of ruth for others, on herself she had no pity ; the spirit was inexorable to the flesh ; from the trembling hand, the unnerved limbs, the fading eyes, the same service was exacted as they had rendered in health. To stand by and witness this, and not dare to remonstrate, was a pain no words can render.

Now again Miss Robinson helps us to fill in the sad picture. Doubtless she took down her narrative from Miss Nussey at a time when that lady's memory was at its best.

The days drew on towards Christmas ; it was already the middle of December and still Emily was about the house, able to wait upon herself, to sew for the others, to take an active share in the duties of the day. She always fed the dogs herself. One Monday evening, it must have been about the 14th of December, she rose as usual to give the creatures their supper. She got up, walking slowly, holding out in her thin hands an apronful of broken meat and bread. But when she reached the flagged passage the cold took her ; she staggered on the uneven pavement and fell against the wall. Her sisters, who had been sadly following her, unseen, came forward much alarmed and begged her to desist. But, smiling wanly, she went on and gave Floss and Keeper their last supper from her hands.

The next morning she was worse. Before her waking, her watching sisters heard the low unconscious moaning that tells of

suffering continued even in sleep; and they feared for what the coming year might hold in store. Of the nearness of the end they they did not dream. Charlotte had been out over the moors searching every glen and hollow for a sprig of heather, however pale and dry, to take to her moor-loving sister. But Emily looked on the flower laid on her pillow with indifferent eyes. She was already estranged and alienate from life.

Nevertheless she persisted in rising, dressing herself alone, and doing everything for herself. A fire had been lit in the room, and Emily sat on the hearth to comb her hair. She was thinner than ever now—the tall, loose-jointed, ‘slinky’ girl—her hair in its plenteous dark abundance was all of her that was not marked by the branding finger of death. She sat on the hearth combing her long brown hair. But soon the comb slipped from her feeble grasp into the cinders. She, the intrepid, active Emily, watched it burn and smoulder, too weak to lift it, while the nauseous, hateful odour of burnt bone rose into her face. At last the servant came in: ‘Martha,’ she said, ‘my comb’s down there; I was too weak to stoop and pick it up.’

I have seen the old, broken comb with a large piece burned out of it, and have thought it, I own, more pathetic than the bones of the eleven thousand virgins at Cologne, or the time-blackened Holy Face of Lucca. Sad, chance confession of human weakness; mournful counterpart of that chainless soul which to the end maintained its fortitude and rebellion. The flesh is weak. Since I saw that relic, the strenuous verse of Emily Brontë’s last poem has seemed to me far more heroic, far more moving; remembering in what clinging and prisoning garments that free spirit was confined.

The flesh was weak, but Emily would grant it no indulgence. She finished her dressing, and came very slowly, with dizzy head and tottering steps, downstairs into the little bare parlour where Anne was working and Charlotte writing a letter. Emily took up some work and tried to sew. Her catching breath, her drawn and altered face were ominous of the end. But still a little hope flickered in those sisterly hearts. ‘She grows daily weaker,’ wrote Charlotte on that memorable Tuesday morning; seeing surely no portent that this—this! was to be the last of the days and the hours of her weakness.

The morning drew on to noon and Emily grew worse. She could no longer speak, but—gasping in a husky whisper—she



said: 'If you will send for a doctor, I will see him now!' Alas, it was too late. The shortness of breath and rending pain increased; even Emily could no longer conceal them. Towards two o'clock her sisters begged her, in an agony, to let them put her to bed. 'No, no,' she cried; tormented with the feverish restlessness that comes before the last, most quiet peace. She tried to rise, leaning with one hand upon the sofa. And thus the cord of life snapped. She was dead. She was thirty years old.<sup>1</sup>

## Letter 321

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*December 23rd, 1848.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—Emily suffers no more from pain or weakness now. She will never suffer more in this world. She is gone, after a hard, short conflict. She died on *Tuesday*, the very day I wrote to you. I thought it very possible she might be with us still for weeks; and a few hours afterwards she was in eternity. Yes; there is no Emily in time or on earth now. Yesterday we put her poor, wasted, mortal frame quietly under the church pavement. We are very calm at present. Why should we be otherwise? The anguish of seeing her suffer is over; the spectacle of the pains of death is gone by; the funeral day is past. We feel she is at peace. No need now to tremble for the hard frost and the keen wind. Emily does not feel them. She died in a time of promise. We saw her taken from life in its prime. But it is God's will, and the place where she is gone is better than she has left.<sup>2</sup>

God has sustained me, in a way that I marvel at, through such agony as I had not conceived. I now look to Anne, and wish she were well and strong; but she is neither; nor is papa. Could you now come to us for a few days? I would not ask you to stay long. Write and tell me if you could come next week, and by what train. I would try to send a gig for you to Keighley. You

<sup>1</sup> *Emily Brontë*, by A. Mary F. Robinson. Emily was in her 31st year, *i.e.* 30 years and 5 months old.

<sup>2</sup> As the old bereaved father and his two surviving children followed the coffin to the grave they were joined by Keeper, Emily's fierce faithful bulldog. He walked alongside of the mourners, and into the church, and stayed quietly there all the time that the burial service was being read. When he came home he lay down at Emily's chamber door, and howled pitifully for many days. Anne Brontë drooped and sickened more rapidly from that time; and so ended the year 1848.—Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*.

will, I trust, find us tranquil. Try to come. I never so much needed the consolation of a friend's presence. Pleasure, of course, there would be none for you in the visit, except what your kind heart would teach you to find in doing good to others.

## Letter 322

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*December 25th, 1848.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I will write to you more at length when my heart can find a little rest—now I can only thank you very briefly for your letter, which seemed to me eloquent in its sincerity.

Emily is nowhere here now, her wasted mortal remains are taken out of the house. We have laid her cherished head under the church aisle beside my mother's, my two sisters'—dead long ago—and my poor, hapless brother's. But a small remnant of the race is left—so my poor father thinks.

Well, the loss is ours, not hers, and some sad comfort I take, as I hear the wind blow and feel the cutting keenness of the frost, in knowing that the elements bring her no more suffering; their severity cannot reach her grave; her fever is quieted, her restlessness soothed, her deep, hollow cough is hushed for ever; we do not hear it in the night nor listen for it in the morning; we have not the conflict of the strangely strong spirit and the fragile frame before us—relentless conflict—once seen, never to be forgotten. A dreary calm reigns round us, in the midst of which we seek resignation.

My father and my sister Anne are far from well. As for me, God has hitherto most graciously sustained me; so far I have felt adequate to bear my own burden and even to offer a little help to others. I am not ill; I can get through daily duties, and do something towards keeping hope and energy alive in our mourning household. My father says to me almost hourly, 'Charlotte, you must bear up, I shall sink if you fail me'; these words, you can conceive, are a stimulus to nature. The sight, too, of my sister Anne's very still but deep sorrow wakens in me such fear for her that I dare not falter. Somebody *must* cheer the rest.

So I will not now ask why Emily was torn from us in the fulness of our attachment, rooted up in the prime of her own days, in the

promise of her powers ; why her existence now lies like a field of green corn trodden down, like a tree in full bearing struck at the root. I will only say, sweet is rest after labour and calm after tempest, and repeat again and again that Emily knows that now.—Yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 323

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*January 2nd, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Untoward circumstances come to me, I think, less painfully than pleasant ones would just now. The lash of the *Quarterly*, however severely applied, cannot sting—as its praise probably would not elate me. Currer Bell feels a sorrowful independence of reviews and reviewers ; their approbation might indeed fall like an additional weight on his heart, but their censure has no bitterness for him.

My sister Anne sends the accompanying answer to the letter received through you the other day ; will you be kind enough to post it ? She is not well yet, nor is papa, both are suffering under severe influenza colds. My letters had better be brief at present—they cannot be cheerful. I am, however, still sustained. While looking with dismay on the desolation sickness and death have wrought in our home I can combine with awe of God's judgments a sense of gratitude for his mercies. Yet life has become very void, and hope has proved a strange traitor ; when I shall again be able to put confidence in her suggestions, I know not : she kept whispering that Emily would not, *could* not die, and where is she now ? Out of my reach, out of my world—torn from me.—Yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## CHAPTER XX

## THE DEATH OF ANNE BRONTË

BRANWELL, Emily, and Anne Brontë all died within a twelvemonth, and that the surviving sister felt it keenly enough her letters give unmistakable evidence. Yet during that year she wrote half of her third novel, *Shirley*. She had, moreover, to face a criticism that touched her sensitive nature with fullest intensity. The *Quarterly Review* for December 1848 contained an article on *Jane Eyre*, which happily its victim did not see until after her sister's death, when the greater misery made the less most trivial. Miss Rigby, afterwards Lady Eastlake, a woman of parts, wrote the article in which it was hinted that the author of *Jane Eyre*, although probably a man, if a woman must be 'one who had forfeited the society of her sex,' and in any case that the book was in 'horrid taste.' There is little use in anathematising such a judgment to-day. It was of the nature of much reviewing in that generation. Every author was liable to it, and the reviewer in this case would not have so written had she known that the author was the daughter of a country clergyman, like herself a warm adherent of Church and State.

## Letter 324

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 10, '49.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I found out that Martha had neglected to put the box into the gig about an hour after you were gone. I shall send it to the Bull and Mouth at Bradford. This morning I



received your kind letter. Mr. Nicholls called yesterday and told us he had met you on the Railway.

Anne had a very tolerable day yesterday, and a pretty quiet night last night, though she did not sleep much. Mr. Wheelhouse ordered the blister to be put on again. She bore it without sickness. I have just dressed it, and she is risen and come downstairs. She looks somewhat pale and sickly. She has had one dose of the cod-liver oil ; it smells and tastes like train oil. I am trying to hope, but the day is windy, cloudy and stormy. My spirits fall at intervals very low ; then I look where you counsel me to look beyond earthly tempests and sorrows. I seem to get strength, if not consolation. It will not do to anticipate. I feel that hourly. In the night, I awake and long for the morning ; *then* my heart is wrung. Papa continues much the same ; he was very faint when he came down to breakfast. I wrote to Huns-worth telling them candidly I would rather they did not come, as owing to circumstances, I felt it was not in my power to receive them as I could wish. Dear Ellen, your friendship is some comfort to me. I am thankful for it. I see few lights through the darkness of the present time ; but amongst them the constancy of a kind heart attached to me is one of the most charming and serene. Remember me to your mother and sisters.

—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 325

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 15th, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I can scarcely say that Anne is worse, nor can I say she is better. She varies often in the course of a day, yet each day is passed pretty much the same. The morning is usually the best time ; the afternoon and evening the most feverish. Her cough is the most troublesome at night, but it is rarely violent. The pain in her arm still disturbs her. She takes the cod-liver oil and carbonate of iron regularly ; she finds them both nauseous, but especially the oil. Her appetite is small indeed. Do not fear that I shall relax in my care of her. She is too precious to me not to be cherished with all the fostering strength I have. Papa, I am thankful to say, has been a good deal better this last day or two.

As to your queries about myself, I can only say, that if I con-

tinue as I am I shall do very well. I have not yet got rid of the pains in my chest and back. They oddly return with every change of weather; and are still sometimes accompanied with a little soreness and hoarseness, but I combat them steadily with pitch plasters and bran tea. I should think it silly and wrong indeed not to be regardful of my own health at present; it would not do to be ill *now*.

I avoid looking forward or backward, and try to keep looking upward. This is not the time to regret, dread, or weep. What I have and ought to do is very distinctly laid out for me; what I want, and pray for, is strength to perform it. The days pass in a slow, dark march; the nights are the test; the sudden wakings from restless sleep, the revived knowledge that one lies in her grave, and another not at my side, but in a separate and sick bed. However, God is over all.—Yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 326

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*January 18th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—In sitting down to write to you I feel as if I were doing a wrong and a selfish thing. I believe I ought to discontinue my correspondence with you till times change, and the tide of calamity which of late days has set so strongly in against us takes a turn. But the fact is, sometimes I feel it absolutely necessary to unburden my mind. To papa I must only speak cheerily, to Anne only encouragingly—to you I may give some hint of the dreary truth.

Anne and I sit alone and in seclusion as you fancy us, but we do not study. Anne cannot study now, she can scarcely read; she occupies Emily's chair; she does not get well. A week ago we sent for a medical man of skill and experience from Leeds to see her. He examined her with the stethoscope. His report I forbear to dwell on for the present—even skilful physicians have often been mistaken in their conjectures.

My first impulse was to hasten her away to a warmer climate, but this was forbidden: she must not travel; she is not to stir from the house this winter; the temperature of her room is to be kept constantly equal.

Had leave been given to try change of air and scene, I should

hardly have known how to act. I could not possibly leave papa ; and when I mentioned his accompanying us, the bare thought distressed him too much to be dwelt upon. Papa is now upwards of seventy years of age ; his habits for nearly thirty years have been those of absolute retirement ; any change in them is most repugnant to him, and probably could not, at this time, especially when the hand of God is so heavy upon his old age, be ventured upon without danger.

When we lost Emily I thought we had drained the very dregs of our cup of trial, but now when I hear Anne cough as Emily coughed, I tremble lest there should be exquisite bitterness yet to taste. However, I must not look forwards, nor must I look backwards. Too often I feel like one crossing an abyss on a narrow plank—a glance round might quite unnerve.

So circumstanced, my dear sir, what claim have I on your friendship, what right to the comfort of your letters? My literary character is effaced for the time, and it is by that only you know me. Care of papa and Anne is necessarily my chief present object in life, to the exclusion of all that could give me interest with my publishers or their connections. Should Anne get better, I think I could rally and become Currer Bell once more, but if otherwise, I look no farther : sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

Anne is very patient in her illness, as patient as Emily was unflinching. I recoil one sister and look at the other with a sort of reverence as well as affection—under the test of suffering neither has faltered.

All the days of this winter have gone by darkly and heavily like a funeral train. Since September sickness has not quitted the house. It is strange it did not use to be so, but I suspect now all this has been coming on for years. Unused, any of us, to the possession of robust health, we have not noticed the gradual approaches of decay ; we did not know its symptoms : the little cough, the small appetite, the tendency to take cold at every variation of atmosphere have been regarded as things of course. I see them in another light now.

If you answer this, write to me as you would to a person in an average state of tranquillity and happiness. I want to keep myself as firm and calm as I can. While papa and Anne want me, I hope, I pray, never to fail them. Were I to see you I should endeavour to converse on ordinary topics, and I should wish to

write on the same—besides, it will be less harassing to yourself to address me as usual.

May God long preserve to you the domestic treasures you value; and when bereavement at last comes, may He give you strength to bear it.—Yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

### Letter 327

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 22nd, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Anne really did seem to be a little better during some mild days last week, but to-day she looks very pale and languid again. She perseveres with the cod-liver oil, but still finds it very nauseous. She is truly obliged to you for the soles for her shoes, and finds them extremely comfortable. I am to commission you to get her just such a respirator as Mrs. Heald had. She would not object to give a higher price if you thought it better. If it is not too much trouble, you may likewise get me a pair of soles; you can send them and the respirator when you send the box. You must put down the price of all, and we will pay you in a Post Office order. *Wuthering Heights* was given to you. Mary Taylor's address I have always written c.o. Mr. Waring Taylor, Wellington, New Zealand. I have sent her neither letter nor parcel. I had nothing but dreary news to write, so preferred that others should tell her. I have not written to Ellen Taylor either. I cannot write, except when I am quite obliged. Remember me to all at Brookroyd. Keep well if you can. Be careful.  
—Yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

### Letter 328

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*February 1st, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Anne seems so tranquil this morning, so free from pain and fever, and looks and speaks so like herself in health, that I too feel relieved, and I take advantage of the respite to write to you, hoping that my letter may reflect something of the comparative peace I feel.

Whether my hopes are quite fallacious or not, I do not know; but sometimes I fancy that the remedies prescribed by Mr. Teale,



and approved—as I was glad to learn—by Dr. Forbes, are working a good result. Consumption, I am aware, is a flattering malady, but certainly Anne's illness has of late assumed a less alarming character than it had in the beginning: the hectic is allayed; the cough gives a more frequent reprieve. Could I but believe she would live two years—a year longer, I should be thankful: I dreaded the terrors of the swift messenger which snatched Emily from us, as it seemed, in a few days.

The parcel came yesterday. You and Mr. Smith do nothing by halves. Neither of you care for being thanked, so I will keep my gratitude in my own mind. The choice of books is perfect. Papa is at this moment reading Macaulay's *History*, which he had wished to see. Anne is engaged with one of Frederika Bremer's tales.

I wish I could send a parcel in return; I had hoped to have had one by this time ready to despatch. When I saw you and Mr. Smith in London, I little thought of all that was to come between July and Spring: how my thoughts were to be caught away from imagination, enlisted and absorbed in realities the most cruel.

I will tell you what I want to do; it is to show you the first volume of my MS., which I have copied. In reading *Mary Barton* (a clever though painful tale) I was a little dismayed to find myself in some measure anticipated both in subject and incident. I should like to have your opinion on this point, and to know whether the resemblance appears as considerable to a stranger as it does to myself. I should wish also to have the benefit of such general strictures and advice as you choose to give. Shall I therefore send the MS. when I return the first batch of books?

But remember, if I show it to you it is on two conditions: the first, that you give me a faithful opinion—I do not promise to be swayed by it, but I should like to have it; the second, that you show it and speak of it to *none* but Mr. Smith. I have always a great horror of premature announcements—they may do harm and can never do good. Mr. Smith must be so kind as not to mention it yet in his quarterly circulars. All human affairs are so uncertain, and my position especially is at present so peculiar, that I cannot count on the time, and would rather that no allusion should be made to a work of which great part is yet to create.

There are two volumes in the first parcel which, having seen, I

cannot bring myself to part with, and must beg Mr. Smith's permission to retain: Mr. Thackeray's *Journey from Cornhill, etc.*, and *The Testimony to the Truth*. That last is indeed a book after my own heart. I *do* like the mind it discloses—it is of a fine and high order. Alexander Harris may be a clown by birth, but he is a nobleman by nature. When I could read no other book, I read his and derived comfort from it. No matter whether or not I can agree in all his views, it is the principles, the feelings, the heart of the man I admire.

Write soon and tell me whether you think it advisable that I should send the MS.—Yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

### Letter 329

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *February 4th*, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—I send the parcel up without delay, according to your request. The manuscript has all its errors upon it, not having been read through since copying. I have kept *Madeline*, along with the two other books I mentioned; I shall consider it the gift of Miss Kavanagh, and shall value it both for its literary excellence and for the modest merit of the giver. We already possess Tennyson's *Poems* and *Our Street*. Emerson's *Essays* I read with much interest, and often with admiration, but they are of mixed gold and clay—deep and invigorating truth, dreary and depressing fallacy seem to me combined therein. In George Borrow's works I found a wild fascination, a vivid graphic power of description, a fresh originality, an athletic simplicity (so to speak), which give them a stamp of their own. After reading his *Bible in Spain* I felt as if I had actually travelled at his side, and seen the 'wild Sil' rush from its mountain cradle; wandered in the hilly wilderness of the Sierras; encountered and conversed with Manehegan, Castillian, Andalusian, Arragonese, and, above all, with the savage Gitanos.

Your mention of Mr. Taylor suggests to me that possibly you and Mr. Smith might wish him to share the little secret of the MS.—that exclusion might seem invidious, that it might make your mutual evening chat less pleasant. If so, admit him to the confidence by all means. He is attached to the firm, and will no doubt keep its secrets. I shall be glad of another censor, and if

a severe one, so much the better, provided he is also just. I court the keenest criticism. Far rather would I never publish more, than publish anything inferior to my first effort. Be honest, therefore, all three of you. If you think this book promises less favourably than *Jane Eyre*, say so ; it is but trying again, *i.e.* if life and health be spared.

Anne continues a little better—the mild weather suits her. At times I hear the renewal of hope's whisper, but I dare not listen too fondly ; she deceived me cruelly before. A sudden change to cold would be the test. I dread such change, but must not anticipate. Spring lies before us, and then summer—surely we may hope a little !

Anne expresses a wish to see the notices of the poems. You had better, therefore, send them. We shall expect to find painful allusions to one now above blame and beyond praise ; but these must be borne. For ourselves, we are almost indifferent to censure. I read the *Quarterly* without a pang, except that I thought there were some sentences disgraceful to the critic. He seems anxious to let it be understood that he is a person well acquainted with the habits of the upper classes. Be this as it may, I am afraid he is no gentleman ; and moreover, that no training could make him such. Many a poor man, born and bred to labour, would disdain that reviewer's cast of feeling.—  
Yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 330

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

WELLINGTON, *February 9th*, 1849.

DEAR ELLEN,—You will think it ridiculous in me to begin to try and persuade you to come out to N.Z. after all. Still more when I know so little of your circumstances as I do just now. But you must not laugh at me, for this is the serious purpose of my letter. I hear from Charlotte Brontë that you are staying in Sussex. What in the world are you doing there ? Getting your living in any way ? Not at all, you are only wishing to do so ; wishing for something to turn up that would enable you to work for yourself instead of for other people, and that no one should know that you were working. Now no such thing exists. There are no means for a woman to live in England but by teaching, sewing, or washing.

The last is the best. The best paid, the least unhealthy, and the most free. But it is not paid well enough to live by. Moreover, it is impossible for any one not born to this position to take it up afterwards. I don't know why, but it is. You might as well ask why one can't move when they have the nightmare, when they know very well!—the stupid things—that they need only just move to send the horror away. If you do it at all it will be by making a desperate plunge, and you will come up in another world. The new world will be no Paradise, but still much better than the nightmare. Am I not right in all this? *and don't you know it* very well! Or am I shooting in the dark? I must say I judge rather by my own history than from any actual knowledge of yours. Still you yourself must judge, for no one else can. What in the world keeps you? Try and persuade some of your twenty brothers to fit you out for N. Zealand. You could get your living here at any of the trades I have mentioned, which you would only die of in England. As to 'society' position in the world, you must have found by this time it is all my eye seeking society without the means to enjoy it. Why not come here then and be happy?

We have had occurrences here nearly as startling as those in Europe. Lots of earthquakes—till they are quite commonplace. This is small inducement, but what do you think of our sending back a subscription raised in Auckland for us because we actually had no destitute to give it to. Aren't we thriving? The Maoris are quiet, and we begin to wish for another disturbance for fear the troops should leave the country.

We have just been to the anniversary races and amused ourselves pretty well and got heartily tired. It did us a deal of good, however. 'We' means Mrs. Knox, all the children, and her married daughter Mrs. Couper, her husband and stepdaughter. Miss Couper is nearly as old as her new mama, and they are both so girlish that they agree very well together. Mr. Couper himself is coarse, ugly, selfish, ignorant, cunning, and dishonest, and all this in the highest degree; however, that only concerns his wife. To me he is very civil because he has the idea that he gets his daughter taught music very cheap when he gives me board and lodging for teaching her when she has time, which is only half an hour now and then. To be sure, I pass here for a monkey who has seen the world, and people receive me well on that account. I wonder what good it does *them* to have the



acquaintance of a person that speaks French? They don't want to learn it.

I once thought of delaying this letter until Ellen Taylor came, but I am in doubt as to whether she is on the way or not, and if she comes I shall not have so much time for writing as I have just now. She will be quite an acquisition to me if she comes. I speak of it so much that the children rouse me in the morning, with 'Miss Taylor, here are your cousins come!'

Mrs. Taylor got a little daughter a month ago. Waring is going to build a new house. As the chimneys of the present one were entirely shaken down by the earthquake, it is just ready for moving back. He will put two new rooms in front two stories high; one will be a store and one a parlour. Two-fifths if not half the houses in Wellington were shaken down by the earthquake, and the town is vastly improved in consequence. Almost everybody is building. We think nothing of what we have lost because no one was ruined. At least only one man whose house was entirely destroyed. He was a doctor, and got such a fright, he resolved to go to Sydney. The vessel he was in was wrecked just outside Wellington harbour, and he brought his family back again to Wellington, having lost everything on the wreck. Fortunately a box was picked up with his money in, and he took his passage for Sydney as soon as possible. He is now on his way to England.

I have just written an account of my present condition and prospects three times over. I therefore recommend you to ask C. Brontë for an abstract of it, for it is so dull telling the same tale so often, I should perhaps be inventing something for a change if I were to write all the history over again.

You have never followed the advice I sent you to send something out to sell. When I received your parcel of collars I thought they were for sale, and as they were the height of the fashion here I should have sold them very well. As it is, I wear them and get envied. The thick one with lace round I sometimes ride in, and tell every one that I have two friends in England wearing the same. I wish I could say I had them over here. You will think that my persuasions for you to come here are like those of the fox who had lost his tail. They are certainly selfish, but not entirely so. Wherever you are, always believe me,—  
Your sincere friend,

MARY TAYLOR.

(On small black wafer) *Dieu vous garde.*

## Letter 331

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*February 16th, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—We received the box and its contents quite safely to-day. The penwipers are very pretty, and we are very much obliged to you for them. I hope the respirator will be useful to Anne, in case she should ever be well enough to go out again. She continues very much in the same state, I trust not greatly worse, though she is becoming very thin. I fear it would be only self-delusion to fancy her better. What effect the advancing season may have on her, I know not; perhaps the return of really warm weather may give nature a happy stimulus. I tremble at the thought of any change to cold wind or frost. Would that March were well over! Her mind seems generally serene, and her sufferings hitherto are nothing like Emily's. The thought of what may be to come grows more familiar to my mind; but it is a sad, dreary guest. Papa is much better than when you were here. I am glad Miss Ringrose is come to you at last. With her I know you will be happier, and for that reason I always feel content to know she is at Brookroyd. Last Sunday I got a short note from Ellen Taylor written in London, they had been in town waiting for the vessel to sail a fortnight. They expected to be off that day. Joe Taylor had left them a week ago. She and Henry were quite alone, poor things! She wrote in pretty good spirits. Give my love to your mother, Ann, Mercy, and Miss Ringrose. My note is short because writing is a task to me. Anne sends her thanks and kind love to you, so do I.—Faithfully yours,

C. B.

We are introduced in the next letter to a new correspondent. Mr. Taylor held an important post in the firm of Smith & Elder, and was ultimately taken into partnership so far as the India branch was concerned. He was small and red-haired. There are two portraits of him before me. They indicate a determined, capable man, thick-set, well bearded: on the whole a vigorous and interesting personality. In any case, Mr. Taylor lost his heart to

Charlotte, and was much more persistent than earlier lovers. He had also the advantage of Mr. Brontë's goodwill. This is all there is to add to the letters themselves, but I may as well say here that he went out to India, and that when he returned to England in 1856 Charlotte Brontë was dead. His after life was more successful than happy. He did not, it is true, succeed in Bombay with the firm of Smith, Taylor and Co. That would seem to have collapsed. But he made friends in Bombay and returned there in 1863 as editor of the *Bombay Gazette* and the *Bombay Quarterly Review*. A little later he became editor of the *Bombay Saturday Review*, which had not, however, a long career. Mr. Taylor's successes were not journalistic but mercantile. As Secretary of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, which appointment he obtained in 1865, he obtained much real distinction. To this post he added that of Registrar of the University of Bombay and many other offices. He was elected Sheriff in 1874, in which year he died. An imposing funeral ceremony took place in the Cathedral, and he was buried in the Bombay cemetery, where his tomb may be found to the left of the entrance gates, inscribed—

JAMES TAYLOR. DIED APRIL 29, 1874, AGED 57.

He married during his visit to England, but the marriage was not a happy one. That does not belong to the present story. Here, however, is a cutting from the *Times* marriage record in 1863 :—

On the 23rd inst., at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, St. Pancras, by the Rev. James Moorhouse, M.A., James Taylor, Esq., of Furnival's-inn, and Bombay, to Annie, widow of Adolph Ritter, of Vienna, and stepdaughter of Thos. Harrison, Esq., of Birchanger Place, Essex.

## Letter 332

TO JAMES TAYLOR, CORNHILL

*March 1st, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—The parcel arrived on Saturday evening. Permit me to express my sense of the judgment and kindness which have dictated the selection of its contents. They appear to be all good books, and good books are, we know, the best substitute for good society; if circumstances debar me from the latter privilege, the kind attentions of my friends supply me with ample measure of the former.

Thank you for your remarks on *Shirley*. Some of your strictures tally with some by Mr. Williams. You both complain of the want of distinctness and impressiveness in my heroes. Probably you are right. In delineating male character I labour under disadvantages: intuition and theory will not always adequately supply the place of observation and experience. When I write about women I am sure of my ground—in the other case, I am not so sure.

Here, then, each of you has laid the critical finger on a point that by its shrinking confesses its vulnerability; whether the disapprobation you intimate respecting the Briarchapel scenes, the curates, etc., be equally merited, time will show. I am well aware what will be the author's present meed for these passages: I anticipate general blame and no praise. And were my motive-principle in writing a thirst for popularity, or were the chief check on my pen a dread of censure, I should withdraw these scenes—or rather, I should never have written them. I will not say whether the considerations that really govern me are sound, or whether my convictions are just; but such as they are, to their influence I must yield submission. They forbid me to sacrifice truth to the fear of blame. I accept their prohibition.

With the sincere expression of my esteem for the candour by which your critique is distinguished,—I am, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 333

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*March 2nd, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—My sister still continues better: she has less languor and weakness; her spirits are improved. This change gives cause, I think, both for gratitude and hope.



I am glad that you and Mr. Smith like the commencement of my present work. I wish it were *more than a commencement*; for how it will be reunited after the long break, or how it can gather force of flow when the current has been checked or rather drawn off so long, I know not.

I sincerely thank you both for the candid expression of your objections. What you say with reference to the first chapter shall be duly weighed. At present I feel reluctant to withdraw it, because, as I formerly said of the Lowood part of *Jane Eyre*, *it is true*. The curates and their ongoings are merely photographed from the life. I should like you to explain to me more fully the ground of your objections. Is it because you think this chapter will render the work liable to severe handling by the press? Is it because knowing as you now do the identity of 'Currer Bell,' this scene strikes you as unfeminine? Is it because it is intrinsically defective and inferior? I am afraid the two first reasons would not weigh with me—the last would.

Anne and I thought it very kind in you to preserve all the notices of the Poems so carefully for us. Some of them, as you said, were well worth reading. We were glad to find that our old friend the *Critic* has again a kind word for us. I was struck with one curious fact, viz., that four of the notices are facsimiles of each other. How does this happen? I suppose they copy.

Your generous indignation against the *Quarterly* touched me. But do not trouble yourself to be angry on Currer Bell's account; except where the May-Fair gossip and Mr. Thackeray's name were brought in he was never stung at all, but he certainly thought that passage and one or two others quite unwarrantable. However, slander without a germ of truth is seldom injurious: it resembles a rootless plant and must soon wither away.

The critic would certainly be a little ashamed of herself if she knew what foolish blunders she had committed, if she were aware how completely Mr. Thackeray and Currer Bell are strangers to each other, that *Jane Eyre* was written before the author had seen one line of *Vanity Fair*, or that if C. Bell had known that there existed in Mr. Thackeray's private circumstances the shadow of a reason for fancying personal allusion, so far from dedicating the book to that gentleman, he would have regarded such a step as ill-judged, insolent, and indefensible, and would have shunned it accordingly.—Believe me, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 334

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*March 3rd, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Hitherto, I have always forgotten to acknowledge the receipt of the parcel from Cornhill. It came at a time when I could not open it nor think of it: its contents are still a mystery. I will not taste, till I can enjoy them. I looked at it the other day. It reminded me too sharply of the time when the first parcel arrived last October: Emily was then beginning to be ill—the opening of the parcel and examination of the books cheered her; their perusal occupied her for many a weary day. The very evening before her last morning dawned I read to her one of Emerson's essays. I read on, till I found she was not listening—I thought to recommence next day. Next day, the first glance at her face told me what would happen before night-fall.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 335

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*March 8th, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Anne's state has apparently varied very little during the last fortnight or three weeks. I wish I could say she gains either flesh, strength, or appetite, but there is no progress on these points, nor I hope, as far as regards the two last at least, any falling off; she is piteously thin. Her cough, and the pain in her side continue the same.

I write these few lines, that you may not think my continued silence strange; anything like frequent correspondence I cannot keep up and you must excuse me. I trust you and Miss Ringrose and all at Brookroyd are happy and well. Give my love to your mother and all the rest, and believe me, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 336

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*March 11th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—My sister has been something worse since I wrote last. We have had nearly a week of frost, and the change has tried her, as I feared it would do, though not so severely as

former experience had led me to apprehend. I am thankful to say she is now again a little better. Her state of mind is usually placid, and her chief sufferings consist in the harassing cough and a sense of languor.

I ought to have acknowledged the safe arrival of the parcel before now, but I put it off from day to day, fearing I should write a sorrowful letter. A similar apprehension induces me to abridge this note.

Believe me whether in happiness or the contrary, yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 337

TO LÆTITIA WHEELWRIGHT<sup>1</sup>

HAWORTH, *March 15th*, 1849.

DEAR LÆTITIA,—I have not quite forgotten you through the winter, but I have remembered you only like some pleasant waking idea struggling through a dreadful dream. You say my last letter was dated September 14th. You ask how I have passed the time since. What has happened to me? Why have I been silent?

It is soon told.

On the 24th of September my only brother, after being long in weak health, and latterly consumptive—though we were far from apprehending immediate danger—died, quite suddenly as it seemed to us. He had been out two days before. The shock was great. Ere he could be interred I fell ill. A low nervous fever left me very weak. As I was slowly recovering, my sister Emily, whom you knew, was seized with inflammation of the lungs; suppuration took place; two agonising months of hopes and fears followed, and on the 19th of December *she died*.

She was scarcely cold in her grave when Anne, my youngest and last sister, who has been delicate all her life, exhibited symptoms that struck us with acute alarm. We sent for the first advice that could be procured. She was examined with the stethoscope, and the dreadful fact was announced that her lungs too were affected, and that tubercular consumption had already made considerable progress. A system of treatment was prescribed, which has since been ratified by the opinion of Dr. Forbes, whom your papa will, I dare say, know. I hope it has

<sup>1</sup> The friend of Brussels days who still lives in Bayswater.

somewhat delayed disease. She is now a patient invalid, and I am her nurse. God has hitherto supported me in some sort through all these bitter calamities, and my father, I am thankful to say, has been wonderfully sustained; but there have been hours, days, weeks of inexpressible anguish to undergo, and the cloud of impending distress still lowers dark and sullen above us. I cannot write much. I can only pray Providence to preserve you and yours from such affliction as He has seen good to accumulate on me and mine.

With best regards to your dear mamma and all your circle,—  
Believe me, yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 338

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*March 16th, '49.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I must write a line in acknowledgment of your last letter and tell you how Anne is getting on. We have found the past week a somewhat trying one; it has not been cold, but still there have been changes of temperature whose effect Anne has felt unfavourably. She is not, I trust, seriously worse, but her cough is at times very hard and painful, and her strength rather diminished than improved. I wish the month of May was well over. You are right in conjecturing that I am somewhat depressed. At times I certainly am. It was almost easier to bear up when the trial was at its crisis than now. The feeling of Emily's loss does not diminish as time wears on; it often makes itself most acutely recognised. It brings too an inexpressible sorrow with it; and then the future is dark. Yet I am well aware, it will not do either to complain, or sink, and I strive to do neither. Strength, I hope and trust, will yet be given in proportion to the burden; but the pain of my position is not one likely to lessen with habit. Its solitude and isolation are oppressive circumstances, yet I do not wish for any friends to stay with me; I could not do with any one—not even *you*—to share the sadness of the house; it would rack me intolerably. Meantime, judgment is blent with mercy. Anne's sufferings still continue mild. It is my nature, when left alone, to struggle on with a certain perseverance, and I believe God will help me.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.



## Letter 339

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *March 24th*, 1849.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I have delayed answering your letter in the faint hope that I might be able to reply favourably to your inquiries after my sister's health. This, however, is not permitted me to do. Her decline is gradual and fluctuating, but its nature is not doubtful. The symptoms of cough, pain in the side and chest, wasting of flesh, strength, and appetite, after the sad experience we have had, cannot but be regarded by us as equivocal.

In spirit she is resigned; at heart she is, I believe, a true Christian. She looks beyond this life, and regards her home and rest as elsewhere than on earth. May God support her and all of us through the trial of lingering sickness, and aid her in the last hour when the struggle which separates soul from body must be gone through!

We saw Emily torn from the midst of us when our hearts clung to her with intense attachment, and when, loving each other as we did—well, it seemed as if (might we but have been spared to each other) we could have found complete happiness in our mutual society and affection. She was scarcely buried when Anne's health failed, and we were warned that consumption had found another victim in her, and that it would be vain to reckon on her life.

These things would be too much if Reason, unsupported by Religion, were condemned to bear them alone. I have cause to be most thankful for the strength which has hitherto been vouchsafed both to my father and myself. God, I think, is specially merciful to old age; and for my own part, trials which in prospective would have seemed to me quite intolerable, when they actually came, I endured without prostration. Yet, I must confess, that in the time which has elapsed since Emily's death there have been moments of solitary, deep, inert affliction, far harder to bear than those which immediately followed our loss. The crisis of bereavement has an acute pang which goads to exertion, the desolate after-feeling sometimes paralyses.

I have learned that we are not to find solace in our own strength: we must seek it in God's omnipotence. Fortitude is

good, but fortitude itself must be shaken under us to teach us how weak we are.

With best wishes to yourself and all dear to you, and sincere thanks for the interest you so kindly continue to take in me and my sister,—Believe me, my dear Miss Wooler, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 340

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*March 29th, '49.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I read your kind note to Anne, and she wishes me to thank you sincerely for your friendly proposal. She feels, of course, that it would not do to take advantage of it, by quartering an invalid upon the inmates of Brookroyd; but she intimates there is another way in which you might serve her, perhaps with some benefit to yourself as well as to her. Should it, a month or two hence, be deemed advisable that she should go either to the seaside or to some inland watering-place, and should papa be disinclined to move, and I consequently obliged to remain at home, she asks, could you be her companion? Of course I need not add that in case of such an arrangement being made, you would be put to no expense. This, dear Ellen, is Anne's proposal; I make it to comply with her wish; but for my own part, I must add that I see serious objections to your accepting it, objections I cannot name to her. She continues to vary; is sometimes worse, and sometimes better, as the weather changes, but on the whole I fear she loses strength. Papa says her state is most precarious; she may be spared for some time, or a sudden alteration might remove her ere we are aware. Were such an alteration to take place while she was far from home, and alone with you, it would be too terrible. The idea of it distresses me inexpressibly, and I tremble whenever she alludes to the project of a journey. In short, I wish we could gain time, and see how she gets on. If she leaves home, it certainly should not be in the capricious month of May, which is proverbially trying to the weak. June would be a safer month. If we could reach June, I should have good hopes of her getting through the summer. Write such an answer to this note as I can show Anne. You can write any additional remarks to me on a separate piece of paper. Do not regard yourself as confined to discussing only

our sad affairs. I am interested in all that interests you. Love to your mother, sisters, and Miss Ringrose.—Yours faithfully,  
C. B.

## Letter 341

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

April 2nd, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—My critics truly deserve and have my genuine thanks for the friendly candour with which they have declared their opinions on my book. Both Mr. Williams and Mr. Taylor express and support their opinions in a manner calculated to command careful consideration. In my turn I have a word to say. You both of you dwell too much on what you regard as the *artistic* treatment of a subject. Say what you will, gentlemen—say it as ably as you will—truth is better than art. Burns' Songs are better than Bulwer's *Epics*. Thackeray's rude, careless sketches are preferable to thousands of carefully finished paintings. Ignorant as I am, I dare to hold and maintain that doctrine.

You must not expect me to give up Malone and Donne too suddenly—the pair are favourites with me; they shine with a chastened and pleasing lustre in that first chapter, and it is a pity you do not take pleasure in their modest twinkle. Neither is that opening scene irrelevant to the rest of the book, there are other touches in store which will harmonise with it.

No doubt this handling of the surplice will stir up such publications as the *Christian Remembrancer* and the *Quarterly*—those heavy Goliaths of the periodical press; and if I alone were concerned, this possibility would not trouble me a second. Full welcome would the giants be to stand in their greaves of brass, poising their ponderous spears, cursing their prey by their gods, and thundering invitations to the intended victim to 'come forth' and have his flesh given to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field. Currer Bell, without pretending to be a David, feels no awe of the unwieldy Anakim; but—comprehend me rightly, gentlemen—it would grieve him to involve others in blame: any censure that would really injure and annoy his publishers would wound himself. Therefore believe that he will not act rashly—trust his discretion.

Mr. Taylor is right about the bad taste of the opening apos-

trophe—that I had already condemned in my own mind. Enough said of a work in embryo. Permit me to request in conclusion that the MS. may now be returned as soon as convenient.

The letter you enclosed is from Mary Howitt. It contained a proposal for an engagement as contributor to an American periodical. Of course I have negatived it. When I *can* write, the book I have in hand must claim all my attention. Oh! if Anne were well, if the void Death has left were a little closed up, if the dreary word *nevermore* would cease sounding in my ears, I think I could yet do something.

It is a long time since you mentioned your own family affairs. I trust Mrs. Williams continues well, and that Fanny and your other children prosper.—Yours sincerely. C. BRONTË.

## Letter 342

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 5th, 1849.*

MY DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—I thank you greatly for your kind letter, and your ready compliance with my proposal as far as the *will* can go at least. I see, however, that your friends are unwilling that you should undertake the responsibility of accompanying me under present circumstances. But I do not think there would be any great responsibility in the matter. I know, and everybody knows, that you would be as kind and helpful as any one could possibly be, and I hope I should not be very troublesome. It would be as a companion, not as a nurse, that I should wish for your company; otherwise I should not venture to ask it. As for your kind and often repeated invitation to Brookroyd, pray give my sincere thanks to your mother and sisters, but tell them I could not think of inflicting my presence upon them as I now am. It is very kind of them to make so light of the trouble, but still there must be more or less, and certainly no pleasure, from the society of a silent invalid stranger. I hope, however, that Charlotte will by some means make it possible to accompany me after all. She is certainly very delicate, and greatly needs a change of air and scene to renovate her constitution. And then your going with me before the end of May is apparently out of the question, unless you are disappointed in your visitors; but I should be reluctant to wait till then if the



weather would at all permit an earlier departure. You say May is a trying month, and so say others. The early part is often cold enough, I acknowledge, but according to my experience, we are almost certain of some fine warm days in the latter half, when the laburnums and lilacs are in bloom; whereas June is often cold, and July generally wet. But I have a more serious reason than this for my impatience of delay. The doctors say that change of air or removal to a better climate would hardly ever fail of success in consumptive cases, if the remedy be taken *in time*; but the reason why there are so many disappointments is that it is generally deferred till it is too late. Now I would not commit this error; and, to say the truth, though I suffer much less from pain and fever than I did when you were with us, I am decidedly weaker, and very much thinner. My cough still troubles me a good deal, especially in the night, and, what seems worse than all, I am subject to great shortness of breath on going up stairs or any slight exertion. Under these circumstances, I think there is no time to be lost. I have no horror of death: if I thought it inevitable, I think I could quietly resign myself to the prospect, in the hope that you, dear Miss Nussey, would give as much of your company as you possibly could to Charlotte, and be a sister to her in my stead. But I wish it would please God to spare me not only for papa's and Charlotte's sakes, but because I long to do some good in the world before I leave it. I have many schemes in my head for future practice, humble and limited indeed, but still I should not like them all to come to nothing, and myself to have lived to so little purpose. But God's will be done. Remember me respectfully to your mother and sisters, and believe me, dear Miss Nussey, yours most affectionately,

ANNE BRONTË.

## Letter 343

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*April 5th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Your note was very welcome. I purposely impose on myself the restraint of writing to you seldom now, because I know but too well my letters cannot be cheering. Yet I confess I am glad when the post brings me a letter: it reminds me that if the sun of action and life does not shine on us, it yet beams full on other parts of the world—and I like the recollection.

I am not going to complain. Anne has indeed suffered much at intervals since I last wrote you—frost and east wind have had their effect. She has passed nights of sleeplessness and pain, and days of depression and languor which nothing could cheer—but still, with the return of genial weather she revives. I cannot perceive that she is feebler now than she was a month ago, though that is not saying much. It proves, however, that no rapid process of destruction is going on in her frame, and keeps alive a hope that with the renovating aid of summer she may yet be spared a long time.

What you tell me of Mr. Lewes seems to me highly characteristic. How sanguine, versatile, and self-confident must that man be who can with ease exchange the quiet sphere of the author for the bustling one of the actor! I heartily wish him success; and, in happier times, there are few things I should have relished more than an opportunity of seeing him in his new character.

The Cornhill books are still our welcome and congenial resource when Anne is well enough to enjoy reading. Carlyle's *Miscellanies* interest me greatly. We have read *The Emigrant Family*. The characters in the work are good, full of quiet truth and nature, and the local colouring is excellent; yet I can hardly call it a good novel. Reflective, truth-loving, and even elevated as is Alexander Harris's mind, I should say he scarcely possesses the creative faculty in sufficient vigour to excel as a writer of fiction. He *creates* nothing—he only copies. His characters are portraits—servilely accurate; whatever is at all ideal is not original. *The Testimony to the Truth* is a better book than any tale he can write will ever be. Am I too dogmatical in saying this?

Anne thanks you sincerely for the kind interest you take in her welfare, and both she and I beg to express our sense of Mrs. Williams's good wishes, which you mentioned in a former letter. We are grateful, too, to Mr. Smith and to all who offer us the sympathy of friendship.

Whenever you can write with pleasure to yourself, remember Currer Bell is glad to hear from you, and he will make his letters as little dreary as he can in reply.—Yours sincerely.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 344

TO MISS BRONTË

WELLINGTON, *April 10th*, 1849.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—I've been delighted to receive a very interesting letter from you with an account of your 'prop. visit' to London, etc. I believe I have tacked this acknowledgment to the tail of my last letter to you, but since then it has dawned on my comprehension that you are becoming a very important personage in this little world, and therefore, d'ye see? I must write again to you. I wish you would give me some account of Newby, and what the man said when confronted with the real Ellis Bell. By the way, having got your secret, will he keep it? And how do you contrive to get your letters under the address of Mr. Bell? The whole scheme must be particularly interesting to hear about. If I could only talk to you for half a day. When do you intend to tell the good people about you?

I am now hard at work expecting Ellen Taylor. She may possibly be here in two months. In the meantime I have left Couper's and I am at present living with the Knoxes. Now the old Dr. came home a few days ago and will neither do any work nor follow his profession, but will live on his wife, who maintains herself and the children, principally with my lodging money and a little sewing and some charity from Waring and Couper. Now the Dr.'s arrival has determined me to flit, so I have ordered a chimney to Waring's old house and shall make myself comfortable there. This house has been moved back from the road and a new one is building in front of it, to be finished in two months. Then the back cottage where Waring now lives will be wheeled on to a neighbour's ground; said neighbour paying £10 for it. I once thought of writing you some of the dozens of schemes I have for E. T., but as the choice depends on her, I think I may as well wait and tell you the one she chooses. The two most reasonable are, keeping a school and keeping a shop. The last is decidedly the most healthy, but the most difficult of accomplishment. I have written an account of the earthquake for *Chambers*, and intend (now don't remind me of this a year hence, because 'la femme propose') to write some more. The next to be 'Physiognomy of the town of Wellington.' What else I shall do I don't know. I find the writing faculty does not in the least depend on the

leisure I have ; much more on the active work I have to do. I write at my novel a little and think of my other work. What this will turn out, God only knows. It is not and never can be forgotten. It is my child, my baby, and *I assure you* such a wonder as never was. I intend him, when full grown, to revolutionise society and 'faire époque' in history.

In the meantime I'm doing a collar in crochet-work. PAG.

## Letter 345

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 12th, '49.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I read Anne's letter to you ; it was touching enough, as you say. If there was no hope beyond this world, no eternity, no life to come, Emily's fate, and that which threatens Anne, would be heart-breaking. I cannot forget Emily's death-day ; it becomes a more fixed, a darker, a more frequently recurring idea in my mind than ever. It was very terrible. She was torn, conscious, panting, reluctant, though resolute, out of a happy life. But it *will not do* to dwell on these things.

I am glad your friends object to your going with Anne ; it would never do. To speak the truth, even if your mother and sisters had consented, I never could. It is not that there is any laborious attention to pay her ; she requires, and will accept, but little nursing ; but there would be hazard, and anxiety of mind, beyond what you ought to be subject to. If, a month or six weeks hence, she continues to wish for a change as much as she does now, I shall (D.V.) go with her myself. It will certainly be paramount duty ; other care must be made subservient to that. I have consulted Mr. Teale, he does not object, and recommends Scarborough, which was Anne's own choice. I trust affairs may be so ordered, that you may be able to be with us at least part of the time. . . . Whether in lodgings or not I should wish to be boarded. Providing oneself is, I think, an insupportable nuisance. I don't like keeping provisions in a cupboard, locking up, being pillaged, and all that. It is a petty, wearing annoyance. Best regards to all at Brookroyd. I am, dear Ellen, yours faithfully,  
C. B.

I am sorry to hear poor Miss Heald and Mrs. C. C. have been ill again. Are they better now ?



## Letter 346

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*April 16th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Your kind advice on the subject of Homœopathy deserves and has our best thanks. We find ourselves, however, urged from more than one quarter to try different systems and medicines, and I fear we have already given offence by not listening to all. The fact is, were we in every instance compliant, my dear sister would be harassed by continual changes. Cod-liver oil and carbonate of iron were first strongly recommended. Anne took them as long as she could, but at last she was obliged to give them up: the oil yielded her no nutriment, it did not arrest the progress of emaciation, and as it kept her always sick, she was prevented from taking food of any sort. Hydropathy was then strongly advised. She is now trying Gobold's Vegetable Balsam; she thinks it does her some good; and as it is the first medicine which has had that effect, she would wish to persevere with it for a time. She is also looking hopefully forward to deriving benefit from change of air. We have obtained Mr. Teale's permission to go to the seaside in the course of six or eight weeks. At first I felt torn between two duties—that of staying with papa and going with Anne; but as it is papa's own most kindly expressed wish that I should adopt the latter plan, and as, besides, he is now, thank God! in tolerable health, I hope to be spared the pain of resigning the care of my sister to other hands, however friendly. We wish to keep together as long as we can. I hope, too, to derive from the change some renewal of physical strength and mental composure) in neither of which points am I what I ought or wish to be) to make me a better and more cheery nurse.

I fear I must have seemed to you hard in my observations about *The Emigrant Family*. The fact was, I compared Alexander Harris with himself only. It is not equal to the *Testimony to the Truth*, but, tried by the standard of other and very popular books too, it is very clever and original. Both subject and the manner of treating it are unhackneyed: he gives new views of new scenes and furnishes interesting information on interesting topics. Considering the increasing necessity for and tendency to emigration, I should think it has a fair chance of securing the success it merits.

I took up Leigh Hunt's book *The Town* with the impression that it would be interesting only to Londoners, and I was surprised, ere I had read many pages, to find myself enchained by his pleasant, graceful, easy style, varied knowledge, just views, and kindly spirit. There is something peculiarly anti-melancholic in Leigh Hunt's writings, and yet they are never boisterous. They resemble sunshine, being at once bright and tranquil.

I like Carlyle better and better. His style I do not like, nor do I always concur in his opinions, nor quite fall in with his hero-worship; but there is a manly love of truth, an honest recognition and fearless vindication of intrinsic greatness, of intellectual and moral worth, considered apart from birth, rank, or wealth, which commands my sincere admiration. Carlyle would never do for a contributor to the *Quarterly*. I have not read his *French Revolution*.

I congratulate you on the approaching publication of Mr. Ruskin's new work. If the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* resemble their predecessor, *Modern Painters*, they will be no lamps at all, but a new constellation—seven bright stars, for whose rising the reading world ought to be anxiously gaze.

Do not ask me to mention what books I should like to read. Half the pleasure of receiving a parcel from Cornhill consists in having its contents chosen for us. We like to discover, too, by the leaves cut here and there, that the ground has been travelled before us. I may however say, with reference to works of fiction, that I should much like to see one of Godwin's works, never having hitherto had that pleasure—*Caleb Williams* or *Fleetwood*, or which you thought best worth reading.

But it is yet much too soon to talk of sending more books; our present stock is scarcely half exhausted. You will perhaps think I am a slow reader, but remember, Currer Bell is a country housewife, and has sundry little matters connected with the needle and kitchen to attend to which take up half his day, especially now, when, alas! there is but one pair of hands where once there were three. I did not mean to touch that chord, its sound is too sad.

I try to write now and then. The effort was a hard one at first. It renewed the terrible loss of last December strangely. Worse than useless did it seem to attempt to write what there no longer lived an 'Ellis Bell' to read; the whole book, with every hope founded on it, faded to vanity and vexation of spirit.

One inducement to persevere and do my best I still have, however, and I am thankful for it: I should like to please my

kind friends at Cornhill. To that end I wish my powers would come back; and if it would please Providence to restore my remaining sister, I think they would.

Do not forget to tell me how you are when you write again. I trust your indisposition is quite gone by this time.—Believe me,  
yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 347

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 20th, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Anne has decided to take the 30/- respirator. I enclose a Post Office Order for payment. My cork soles I find extremely comfortable. Dear Ellen, *let* me have the comfort of thanking you for your kindness.

During the mild weather Anne really seemed something better. I began to flatter myself she was gathering strength. But the change to frost has told upon her; she suffers more of late. Still her illness has none of the fearful, rapid symptoms which appalled in Emily's case. Could she only get over the spring, I hope summer may do much for her, and then early removal to a warmer locality for the winter might, at least, prolong her life. Could we only reckon upon another year, I should be thankful; but can we do this even for the healthy? A few days ago I wrote to have Dr. Forbes' opinion. He is editor of the *Medical Review*, and one of the first authorities in England on consumptive cases. I stated Mr. Teale's report of her state and the system of treatment prescribed. Dr. Forbes said he knows Mr. Teale well, and thinks highly of his skill. The remedies were precisely those he would have recommended himself. He warned us against entertaining sanguine hopes of recovery. The cod-liver oil he considers a peculiarly efficacious medicine. He, too, disapproved of the change of residence for the present. There is some feeble consolation in thinking we are doing the very best that can be done. The agony of forced, total neglect, is not now felt, as during Emily's illness. Never may we be doomed to feel such agony again. It was terrible. I have felt much less of the disagreeable pains in my chest lately, and much less also of the soreness and hoarseness. I tried an application of hot vinegar, which seemed to do good. Give my love to all. Write to me again soon, and believe me,—  
Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 348

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 1st, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am glad to hear that when we go to Scarborough, you will be at liberty to go with us ; but the journey and its consequences still continue a source of great anxiety to me ; I must try to put it off two or three weeks longer if I can ; perhaps by that time the milder season may have given Anne more strength, perhaps it will be otherwise ; I cannot tell. The change to fine weather has not proved beneficial to her so far. She has sometimes been so weak, and suffered so much from pain in the side, during the last few days, that I have not known what to think. She may rally again, and be much better, but there must be *some* improvement before I can feel justified in taking her away from home. Yet to delay is painful ; for, as is *always* the case, I believe, under the circumstances, she seems herself but half conscious of the necessity for such delay. She wonders, I believe, why I don't talk more about the journey : it grieves me to think she may even be hurt by my seeming tardiness. She is very much emaciated, far more so than when you were with us ; her arms are no thicker than a little child's. The least exertion brings a shortness of breath. She goes out a little every day, but we creep rather than walk. Papa continues pretty well, and I have had better health myself, during the last two or three weeks, than I had a month ago. I *trust* I shall be enabled to bear up. So far I have reason for thankfulness. You will miss the society of Miss Amelia Ringrose. Take care of yourself, observe regular exercise, and be on your guard against cold ; health is a priceless blessing, and one of which we may be easily robbed. If Anne seems at all better or even worse in a week or two I will let you know.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 349

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*May 8th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I hasten to acknowledge the two kind letters for which I am indebted to you. That fine spring weather of which you speak did not bring such happiness to us in its sunshine as I trust it did to you and thousands besides—the change proved



trying to my sister. For a week or ten days I did not know what to think, she became so weak, and suffered so much from increased pain in the side, and aggravated cough. The last few days have been much colder, yet, strange to say, during their continuance she has appeared rather to revive than sink. She not unfrequently shows the very same symptoms which were apparent in Emily only a few days before she died—fever in the evenings, sleepless nights, and a sort of lethargy in the morning hours; this creates acute anxiety—then comes an improvement, which reassures. In about three weeks, should the weather be genial and her strength continue at all equal to the journey, we hope to go to Scarborough'. It is not without misgiving that I contemplate a departure from home under such circumstances; but since she herself earnestly wishes the experiment to be tried, I think it ought not to be neglected. We are in God's hands, and must trust the results to Him. An old schoolfellow of mine, a tried and faithful friend, has volunteered to accompany us. I shall have the satisfaction of leaving papa to the attentions of two servants equally tried and faithful. One of them is indeed now old and infirm, and unfit to stir much from her chair by the kitchen fireside; but the other is young and active, and even she has lived with us seven years. I have reason, therefore, you see, to be thankful amidst sorrow, especially as papa still possesses every faculty unimpaired, and though not robust, has good general health—a sort of chronic cough is his sole complaint.

I hope Mr. Smith will not risk a cheap edition of *Jane Eyre* yet; he had better wait awhile—the public will be sick of the name of that one book. I can make no promise as to when another will be ready—neither my time nor my efforts are my own. That absorption in my employment to which I gave myself up without fear of doing wrong when I wrote *Jane Eyre*, would now be alike impossible and blamable; but I do what I can, and have made some little progress. We must all be patient.

Meantime, I should say, let the public forget at their ease, and let us not be nervous about it. And as to the critics, if the Bells possess real merit, I do not fear impartial justice being rendered them one day. I have a very short mental as well as physical sight in some matters, and am far less uneasy at the idea of public impatience, misconstruction, censure, etc., than I am at the thought of the anxiety of those two or three friends in Cornhill to whom I owe much kindness, and whose expectations I would

earnestly wish not to disappoint. If they can make up their minds to wait tranquilly, and put some confidence in my goodwill, if not my power, to get on as well as may be, I shall not repine; but I verily believe that the 'nobler sex' find it more difficult to wait, to plod, to work out their destiny inch by inch, than their sisters do. They are always for walking so fast and taking such long steps, one cannot keep up with them. One should never tell a gentleman that one has commenced a task till it is nearly achieved. Currer Bell, even if he had no let or hindrance, and if his path was quite smooth, could never march with the tread of a Scott, a Bulwer, a Thackeray, or a Dickens. I want you and Mr. Smith clearly to understand this. I have always wished to guard you against exaggerated anticipations—calculate low when you calculate on me. An honest man—and woman too—would always rather rise above expectation than fall below it.

Have I lectured enough? and am I understood?

Give my sympathising respects to Mrs. Williams. I hope her little daughter is by this time restored to perfect health. It pleased me to see with what satisfaction you speak of your son. I was glad, too, to hear of the progress and welfare of Miss Kavanagh. The notices of Mr. Harris's works are encouraging and just—may they contribute to his success!

Should Mr. Thackeray again ask after Currer Bell, say the secret is and will be well kept because it is not worth disclosure. This fact his own sagacity will have already led him to divine. In the hope that it may not be long ere I hear from you again,—  
Believe me, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 350

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *May 16th*, 1849.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I will lose no time in thanking you for your letter and kind offer of assistance. We have, however, already engaged lodgings. I am not myself acquainted with Scarbro', but Anne knows it well, having been there three or four times. She had a particular preference for the situation of some lodgings (No. 2 Cliff).<sup>1</sup> We wrote about them, and finding them disengaged, took them. Your information is, notwithstanding,

<sup>1</sup> The houses called 'The Cliff' have been pulled down. The Grand Hotel stands on the site.

valuable, should we find this place in any way ineligible. It is a satisfaction to be provided with directions for future use.

Next Wednesday is the day fixed for our departure. Ellen Nussey accompanies us (by Anne's expressed wish). I could not refuse her society, but I dared not urge her to go, for I have little hope that the excursion will be one of pleasure or benefit to those engaged in it. Anne is extremely weak. She herself has a fixed impression that the sea air will give her a chance of regaining strength; that chance, therefore, we must have. Having resolved to try the experiment, misgivings are useless; and yet, when I look at her, misgivings will rise. She is more emaciated than Emily was at the very last; her breath scarcely serves her to mount the stairs, however slowly. She sleeps very little at night, and often passes most of the forenoon in a semi-lethargic state. Still, she is up all day, and even goes out a little when it is fine. Fresh air usually acts as a stimulus, but its reviving power diminishes.

With best wishes for your own health and welfare,—Believe me, my dear Miss Wooler, yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 351

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 16th, '49.*

DEAR ELLEN,—We have now made our arrangements for the journey. We shall leave Keighley about half-past one o'clock, and expect to reach Leeds soon after two on Wednesday the 23rd, that is next week. It is with a heavy heart I prepare; and earnestly do I wish the fatigue of the journey were well over. It may be borne better than I expect; for temporary stimulus often does much; but when I see the daily increasing weakness, I know not what to think. I fear you will be shocked when you see Anne; but be on your guard, dear Ellen, not to express your feelings; indeed, I can trust both your self-possession and your kindness. I wish my judgment sanctioned the step of going to Scarborough more fully than it does. You ask how I have arranged about leaving papa. I could make no special arrangement. He wishes me to go with Anne, and would not hear of Mr. — coming, or anything of that kind; so I do what I believe is for the best, and leave the result to Providence. Best love to all. Is your sister Ann's affair settled?—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 352

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 20th, '49.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I returned Mary Taylor's letter to Hunsworth as soon as I had read it. Thank God she was safe up to that time, but I do not think the earthquake was then over. I shall long to hear tidings of her again.

Anne was worse during the warm weather we had about a week ago. She grew weaker, and both the pain in her side and her cough were worse; strange to say, since it is colder, she has appeared rather to revive, than sink. I still hope that if she gets over May she may last a long time.

We have engaged lodgings at Scarbro'. We stipulated for a good-sized sitting-room and an airy double-bedded lodging-room, with a sea view, and if not deceived, have obtained these desiderata at No. 2 Cliff. Anne says it is one of the best situations in the place. It would not have done to have taken lodgings either in the town or on the bleak steep [North] coast, where Miss Wooler's house is situated. If Anne is to get any good she must have every advantage. Miss Outhwaite [her godmother] left her in her will a legacy of £200, and she cannot employ her money better than in obtaining what may prolong existence, if it does not restore health. We hope to leave home on the 23rd, and I think it will be advisable to rest at York, and stay all night there. I hope this arrangement will suit you. We reckon on your society, dear Ellen, as a real privilege and pleasure. We shall take little luggage, and shall have to buy bonnets and dresses and several other things either at York or Scarbro'; which place do you think would be best? Oh, if it would please God to strengthen and revive Anne, how happy we might be together! His will, however, must be done, and if she is not to recover, it remains to pray for strength and patience.

C. B.

## Letter 353

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*NO. 2 CLIFF, SCARBORO', May 27th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—The date above will inform you why I have not answered your last letter more promptly. I have been busy



with preparations for departure and with the journey. I am thankful to say we reached our destination safely, having rested one night at York. We found assistance wherever we needed it; there was always an arm ready to do for my sister what I was not quite strong enough to do: lift her in and out of the carriages, carry her across the line, etc.

It made her happy to see both York and its Minster, and Scarboro' and its bay once more. There is yet no revival of bodily strength—I fear indeed the slow ebb continues. People who see her tell me I must not expect her to last long—but it is something to cheer her mind.

Our lodgings are pleasant. As Anne sits at the window she can look down on the sea, which this morning is calm as glass. She says if she could breathe more freely she would be comfortable at this moment—but she cannot breathe freely.

My friend Ellen is with us. I find her presence a solace. She is a calm, steady girl—not brilliant, but good and true. She suits and has always suited me well. I like her, with her phlegm, repose, sense, and sincerity, better than I should like the most talented without these qualifications.

If ever I see you again I should have pleasure in talking over with you the topics you allude to in your last—or rather, in hearing *you* talk them over. We see these things through a glass darkly—or at least I see them thus. So far from objecting to speculation on, or discussion of, the subject, I should wish to hear what others have to say. By *others*, I mean only the serious and reflective—levity in such matters shocks as much as hypocrisy.

Write to me. In this strange place your letters will come like the visits of a friend. Fearing to lose the post, I will add no more at present.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 354

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*May 30th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—My poor sister is taken quietly home at last. She died on Monday. With almost her last breath she said she was happy, and thanked God that death was come, and come so gently. I did not think it would be so soon.

You will not expect me to add more at present.—Yours  
faithfully,<sup>1</sup> C. BRONTË.

Mrs. Gaskell also adds a fact or two from Ellen Nussey's notes :—

On the Tuesday Charlotte wrote to her father ; but knowing that his presence was required for some annual church solemnity at Haworth, she informed him that she had made all necessary arrangements for the interment, and that the funeral would take place so soon that he could hardly arrive in time for it. The surgeon who had visited Anne on the day of her death offered his attendance, but it was respectfully declined.

A lady from the same neighbourhood as Ellen Nussey was staying in Scarborough at this time ; she, too, kindly offered sympathy and assistance ; and when that solitary pair of mourners (the sister and the friend) arrived at the church this lady was there, in unobtrusive presence, not the less kind because unobtrusive.

Mr. Brontë wrote to urge Charlotte's longer stay at the seaside. Her health and spirits were sorely shaken ; and much as he naturally longed to see his only remaining child, he felt it right to persuade her to take, with her friend, a few more weeks' change of scene, though even that could not bring change of thought.

## Letter 355

TO MARTHA BROWN

SCARBRO', June 5th, 1849.

DEAR MARTHA,—I was very much pleased with your note, and glad to learn that all at home are getting on pretty well. It will still be a week or ten days before I return, and you must not tire yourself too much with the cleaning.

My sister Anne's death could not be otherwise than a great trouble to me, though I have known for many weeks that she could not get better. She died very calmly and gently : she was quite sensible to the last. About three minutes before she died

<sup>1</sup> The inscription on the tomb in Scarborough churchyard runs as follows :—

*'Here lie the Remains of Anne Brontë, Daughter of the Rev. P. Brontë, Incumbent of Haworth, Yorkshire. She Died, aged 29, May 28, 1849.'*

she said she was very happy, and believed she was passing out of earth into heaven. It was not her custom to talk much about religion; but she was very good, and I am certain she is now in a far better place than any this world contains.

I mean to send one of the boxes home this week, as I have more luggage than is convenient to carry about. Give my best love to Tabby.—I am, dear Martha, your sincere friend,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 356

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*June 25th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I am now again at home, where I returned last Thursday. I call it *home* still—much as London would be called London if an earthquake should shake its streets to ruins. But let me not be ungrateful: Haworth parsonage is still a home for me, and not quite a ruined or desolate home either. Papa is there, and two most affectionate and faithful servants, and two old dogs, in their way as faithful and affectionate—Emily's large house-dog which lay at the side of her dying bed, and followed her funeral to the vault, lying in the pew couched at our feet while the burial service was being read—and Anne's little spaniel. The ecstasy of these poor animals when I came in was something singular. At former returns from brief absences they always welcomed me warmly—but not in that strange, heart-touching way. I am certain they thought that, as I was returned, my sisters were not far behind. But here my sisters will come no more. Keeper may visit Emily's little bedroom—as he still does day by day—and Flossy may still look wistfully round for Anne, they will never see them again—nor shall I—at least the human part of me. I must not write so sadly, but how can I help thinking and feeling sadly? In the daytime effort and occupation aid me, but when evening darkens, something in my heart revolts against the burden of solitude—the sense of loss and want grows almost too much for me. I am not good or amiable in such moments, I am rebellious, and it is only the thought of my dear father in the next room, or of the kind servants in the kitchen, or some caress from the poor dogs, which restores me to softer sentiments and more rational views. As to the night—could I

do without bed, I would never seek it. Waking, I think, sleeping, I dream of them ; and I cannot recall them as they were in health, still they appear to me in sickness and suffering. Still, my nights were worse after the first shock of Branwell's death—they were terrible then ; and the impressions experienced on waking were at that time such as we do not put into language. Worse seemed at hand than was yet endured—in truth, worse awaited us.

All this bitterness must be tasted. Perhaps the palate will grow used to the draught in time, and find its flavour less acrid. This pain must be undergone ; its poignancy, I trust, will be blunted one day. Ellen would have come back with me, but I would not let her. I knew it would be better to face the desolation at once—later or sooner the sharp pang must be experienced.

Labour must be the cure, not sympathy. Labour is the only radical cure for rooted sorrow. The society of a calm, serenely cheerful companion—such as Ellen—soothes pain like a soft opiate, but I find it does not probe or heal the wound ; sharper, more severe means, are necessary to make a remedy. Total change might do much ; where that cannot be obtained, work is the best substitute.

I by no means ask Miss Kavanagh to write to me. Why should she trouble herself to do it ? What claim have I on her ? She does not know me—she cannot care for me except vaguely and on hearsay. I have got used to your friendly sympathy, and it comforts me. I have tried and trust the fidelity of one or two other friends, and I lean upon it. The natural affection of my father, and the attachment and solicitude of our two servants are precious and consolatory to me, but I do not look round for general pity ; conventional condolence I do not want, either from man or woman.

The letter you enclosed in your last bore the signature H. S. Mayers—the address, Sheepscombe, Stroud, Gloucestershire ; can you give me any information respecting the writer ? It is my intention to acknowledge it one day. I am truly glad to hear that your little invalid is restored to health, and that the rest of your family continue well. Mrs. Williams should spare herself for her husband's and children's sake. Her life and health are too valuable to those round her to be lavished—she should be careful of them.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.



## Letter 357

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*July 1st, '49.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I intended to have written a line to you to-day, if I had not received yours. We did, indeed, part suddenly; it made my heart ache that we were severed without the time to exchange a word; and yet perhaps it was better. I got home a little before eight o'clock. All was clean and bright, waiting for me. Papa and the servants were well; and all received me with an affection which should have consoled. The dogs seemed in strange ecstasy. I am certain they regarded me as the harbinger of others. The dumb creatures thought that as I was returned, those who had been so long absent were not far behind.

I left papa soon and went into the dining-room: I shut the door. I tried to be glad that I was come home. I have always been glad before—except once, even then I was cheered. But this time joy was not to be the sensation. I felt that the house was all silent, the rooms were all empty. I remembered where the three were laid—in what narrow dark dwellings,—never more to reappear on earth. So the sense of desolation and bitterness took possession of me. The agony that *was to be undergone*, and *was not* to be avoided, came on. I underwent it, and passed a dreary evening and night, and a mournful morrow; to-day I am better.

I do not know how life will pass, but I certainly do feel confidence in Him who has upheld me hitherto. Solitude may be cheered, and made endurable beyond what I can believe. The great trial is when evening closes and night approaches. At that hour, we used to assemble in the dining-room; we used to talk. Now I sit by myself; necessarily I am silent. I cannot help thinking of their last days, remembering their sufferings, and what they said and did, and how they looked in mortal affliction. Perhaps all this will become less poignant in time.

Let me thank you once more, dear Ellen, for your kindness to me, which I do not mean to forget. How did they think you were looking at home? Papa thought me a little stronger; he said my eyes were not so sunken. I am glad to hear a good account of your mother, and a tolerable one of Mercy. I hope she will soon recover her health. Love to all. Write again very soon and tell me how poor Miss H—— goes on. Saturday.  
Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## CHAPTER XXI

## 'SHIRLEY'

ALTHOUGH *Shirley* is perhaps the least distinctive of Charlotte Brontë's four novels, it must always have a special interest, if only on account of its presentation of her sister Emily in the character of Shirley Keeldar. Shirley was, she said, what Emily might have been 'had she been placed in health and prosperity.' The three curates, again, are a feature of untiring interest. We follow the story of Mr. Donne, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Sweeting with a desire to know something of their later career. Mr. Donne, or Joseph Brett Grant, was the master of the Haworth Grammar School at the time. He became curate and afterwards vicar of Oxenhope, where he died greatly esteemed a quarter of a century later. Peter Augustus Malone, who was James William Smith in real life, was for two years curate to Mr. Brontë at Haworth. He had graduated at Trinity College, Dublin, and after a two years' curacy at Haworth he became curate of the neighbouring parish of Keighley. In 1847, his family having suffered frightfully from the Irish famine, he determined to try and build up a home for them on the American continent, and sailed for Canada. The last that was heard of him was from Minnesota, where he was cutting down trees for lumbermen; and he probably perished on his way to the goldfields of California.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *A Well-known Character in Fiction*, the true story of Mr. Peter Malone in *Shirley*, by his nephew, Robert Keating Smith, in *The Tatler*, April 2, 1902. Mr. R. K. Smith writes with enthusiasm of his uncle, and his article in *The Tatler* brought him

David Sweeting, the third curate, was the Rev. James Chesterton Bradley (who had been educated at Queen's College, Oxford), from the neighbouring parish of Oakworth, to which he had been curate since 1843. He went in 1847 to All Saints', Paddington; in 1856 he went to Corfe Castle, Dorset, and in 1863 he became rector of Sutton-under-Brayles, Warwickshire, a living which he held until 1904, when he retired. He is still living at an advanced age at Richmond, Surrey. Mr. Bradley has always found great pleasure in recalling the fact that he was the prototype of Mr. Sweeting in *Shirley*, although he declares that the meetings of the curates at each other's lodgings were exclusively for a series of two-hours' readings of the Greek fathers, and not for the drunken orgies described in *Shirley*.

a letter from the one curate who happily still survives. It is only fair to the memory of the curates that this letter should be published.

SUTTON RECTORY, BRAYLES, BANBURY,  
ENGLAND, *May 3rd*, 1902.

Rev. ROBERT KEATING SMITH.

DEAR SIR,—A short paper of yours in *The Tatler* of April 2nd brought before me my old friend James W. Smith. He and I were fellow-curates in Yorkshire, he curate of Haworth, and I of the hill part of Keighley which joined on to Haworth. Of course I saw a great deal of him, and we were great friends. He and I with another of the name of Grant were the three curates in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*. I need not say how indignant I have often been at the way in which she speaks of him in the novel. He was a thorough gentleman in every sense of the word, and there was not the slightest ground for the insinuation she makes against him. But my chief object in writing is to ask if you can tell me anything more about him than what you have written in the periodical. I, the 'Davy Sweeting' of the novel, was obliged to resign the incumbency of Oakworth from ill-health not very long before he left, and during my illness I had a letter from him (lost now, I grieve to say), and then I heard that he had gone abroad, and the rumour was spread that he had been wrecked on the coast of Canada. It was after this, I believe, that the novel came out. We used to read together, walk together, and as often as we could, about once a week, meet either at his or my lodgings. Please excuse me for thus intruding on you, but I was anxious to give my testimony against the false and cruel way in which Charlotte Brontë has held him up in her book.—Believe me, yours very truly,

(Signed) JAMES C. BRADLEY.

## Letter 358

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*July 3rd, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—You do right to address me on subjects which compel me, in order to give a coherent answer, to quit for a moment my habitual train of thought. The mention of your healthy-living daughters reminds me of the world where other people live—where I lived once. Theirs are cheerful images as you present them—I have no wish to shut them out.

From all you say of Ellen, the eldest, I am inclined to respect her much. I like practical sense which works to the good of others. I esteem a dutiful daughter who makes her parents happy.

Fanny's character I would take on second hand from nobody, least of all from her kind father, whose estimate of human nature in general inclines rather to what *ought* to be than to what *is*. Of Fanny I would judge for myself, and that not hastily nor on first impressions.

I am glad to hear that Louisa has a chance of a presentation to Queen's College. I hope she will succeed. Do not, my dear sir, be indifferent—be earnest about it. Come what may afterwards, an education secured is an advantage gained—a priceless advantage. Come what may, it is a step towards independency, and one great curse of a single female life is its dependency. It does credit both to Louisa's heart and head that she herself wishes to get this presentation. Encourage her in the wish. Your daughters—no more than your sons—should be a burden on your hands. Your daughters—as much as your sons—should aim at making their way honourably through life. Do not wish to keep them at home. Believe me, teachers may be hard-worked, ill-paid, and despised, but the girl who stays at home doing nothing is worse off than the hardest-wrought and worst-paid drudge of a school. Whenever I have seen, not merely in humble, but in affluent homes, families of daughters sitting waiting to be married, I have pitied them from my heart. It is doubtless well—very well—if Fate decrees them a happy marriage; but, if otherwise, give their existence some object, their time some occupation, or the peevishness of disappointment and the listlessness of idleness will infallibly degrade their nature.

Should Louisa eventually go out as a governess, do not be un-



easy respecting her lot. The sketch you give of her character leads me to think she has a better chance of happiness than one in a hundred of her sisterhood. Of pleasing exterior (that is always an advantage—children like it), good sense, obliging disposition, cheerful, healthy, possessing a good average capacity, but no prominent master talent to make her miserable by its cravings for exercise, by its mutiny under restraint—Louisa thus endowed will find the post of governess comparatively easy. If she be like her mother—as you say she is—and if, consequently, she is fond of children, and possesses tact for managing them, their care is her natural vocation—she ought to be a governess.

Your sketch of Braxborne, as it is and as it was, is sadly pleasing. I remember your first picture of it in a letter written a year ago—only a year ago. I was in this room—where I now am—when I received it. I was not alone then. In those days your letters often served as a text for comment—a theme for talk; now, I read them, return them to their covers and put them away. Johnson, I think, makes mournful mention somewhere of the pleasure that accrues when we are ‘solitary and cannot impart it.’ Thoughts, under such circumstances, cannot grow to words, impulses fail to ripen to actions.

Lonely as I am, how should I be if Providence had never given me courage to adopt a career—perseverance to plead through two long, weary years with publishers till they admitted me? How should I be with youth past, sisters lost, a resident in a moorland parish where there is not a single educated family? In that case I should have no world at all: the raven, weary of surveying the deluge, and without an ark to return to, would be my type. As it is, something like a hope and motive sustains me still. I wish all your daughters—I wish every woman in England, had also a hope and motive. Alas! there are many old maids who have neither.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 359

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *July 4th*, 1849.

I get on as well as I can. Home is not the home it used to be—that you may well conceive; but so far, I get on.

I cannot boast of vast benefits derived from change of air yet;

but unfortunately I brought back the seeds of a cold with me from that dismal Easton, and I have not got rid of it yet. Still I think I look better than I did before I went. How are you? You have never told me.

Mr. Williams has written to me twice since my return, chiefly on the subject of his third daughter, who wishes to be a governess, and has some chances of a presentation to Queen's College, an establishment connected with the Governess Institution; this will secure her four years of instruction. He says Mr. George Smith is kindly using his influence to obtain votes, but there are so many candidates he is not sanguine of success.

I had a long letter from Mary Taylor—interesting but sad, because it contained many allusions to those who are in this world no more. She mentioned you, and seemed impressed with an idea of the lamentable nature of your unoccupied life. She spoke of her own health as being excellent.

Give my love to your mother and sisters, and,—Believe me  
yours, C. B.

## Letter 360

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *July 14th* 1849.

I do not much like giving you an account of myself. I like better to go out of myself, and talk of something more cheerful. My cold, wherever I got it, whether at Easton or elsewhere, is not vanished yet. It began in my head; then I had a sore throat, and then a sore chest, with a cough, but only a trifling cough, which I still have at times. The pains between my shoulders likewise annoyed me much. Say nothing about it, for I confess I am too much disposed to be nervous. This nervousness is a horrid phantom. I dare communicate no ailment to papa; his anxiety harasses me inexpressibly.

My life is what I expected it to be. Sometimes when I wake in the morning, and know that Solitude, Remembrance, and Longing, are to be almost my sole companions all day through, that at night I shall go to bed with them, that they will keep me sleepless, that next morning I shall wake to them again; sometimes, Ellen, I have a heavy heart of it. But crushed I am not yet; nor robbed of elasticity, nor of hope, nor quite of endeavour.

Still I have some strength to fight the battle of life. I am aware, and can acknowledge, I have many comforts, many mercies. Still I can *get on*. But I do hope and pray, that never may you, or any one I love, be placed as I am. To sit in a lonely room, the clock ticking loud through a still house, and to have open before the mind's eye the record of the last year, with its shocks, sufferings, losses, is a trial.

I write to you freely, because I believe you will hear me with moderation, that you will not take alarm or think me in any way worse off than I am. My love to your mother and sisters, and believe me yours sincerely,

C. B.

## Letter 361

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

July 24th, '49.

DEAR ELLEN,—I enclose a £5 note, which I hope you will receive safely, and will thank you to buy a patent shower-bath and such a boa and cuffs as you can get for the money I name. As to the colour of fur, I can only say I prefer grey or dark furs to the yellow and tawny kind.

I am glad to hear Ann is going to be married soon. I dare not give advice about her dress, it is above me, you will settle all that as right as a trivet. When you marry I will give you your choice of two costumes, silver-grey and white or dove colour and pale pink. But I should say some shade of violet would be preferable, not that I understand the code of laws in these matters, in the least. I am truly glad to hear that R. R. is better. I have often thought of her, but did not like to ask lest I should hear bad news; her symptoms seemed to me threatening. I shall not soon forget her face, so pretty, modest, *sensitive*,—that was the peculiar charm in my eyes; pretty faces, modest faces, I see sometimes; *sensitive* faces, seldom indeed. It was odd, in her sister's face I could not discover that trace of feeling; had I found it, it would for me have given something better than beauty to her otherwise homely features. Wanting it, had I not known how amiable she is I should hardly have judged of her so favourably as she deserves.—Yours truly,

C. B.

Louisa Williams has obtained her presentation. Poor Mary Swaine,

## Letter 362

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*July 26th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I must rouse myself to write a line to you, lest a more protracted silence should seem strange.

Truly glad was I to hear of your daughter's success. I trust its results may conduce to the permanent advantage both of herself and her parents.

Of still more importance than your children's education is your wife's health, and therefore it is still more gratifying to learn that your anxiety on that account is likely to be alleviated. For her own sake, no less than for that of others, it is to be hoped that she is now secured from a recurrence of her painful and dangerous attacks. It was pleasing, too, to hear of good qualities being developed in the daughters by the mother's danger. May your girls always so act as to justify their father's kind estimate of their characters; may they never do what might disappoint or grieve him!

Your suggestion relative to myself is a good one in some respects, but there are two persons whom it would not suit; and not the least incommoded of these would be the young person whom I might request to come and bury herself in the hills of Haworth, to take a church and stony churchyard for her prospect, the dead silence of a village parsonage—in which the tick of the clock is heard all day long—for her atmosphere, and a grave silent spinster for her companion. I should not like to see youth thus immured. The hush and gloom of our house would be more oppressive to a buoyant than to a subdued spirit. The fact is, my work is my best companion; hereafter I look for no great earthly comfort except what congenial occupation can give. For society, long seclusion has in a great measure unfitted me, I doubt whether I should enjoy it if I might have it. Sometimes I think I should, and I thirst for it; but at other times I doubt my capability of pleasing or deriving pleasure. The prisoner in solitary confinement, the toad in the block of marble, all in time shape themselves to their lot.—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.



# Letter 363

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

August 3rd, '49.

DEAR ELLEN,—I have received the furs safely, I like the sables very much, and shall keep them, and ‘to save them’ shall keep the squirrel, as you prudently suggested. I hope it is not too much like using the steel poker to save the brass one. I return Mary Gorham’s letter, it is another page from the volume of life, and at the bottom is written ‘Finis,’ mournful word. Macaulay’s History was only *lent* to myself; all the books I have from London I accept only as a loan, except in peculiar cases, where it is the author’s wish I should possess his work.

Do you think in a few weeks it will be possible for you to come to see me? I am only waiting to get my labour off my hands to permit myself the pleasure of asking you.

I am sadly afraid Ann’s marriage will come in the way. At our house you can read as much as you please.

I have been much better, very free from oppression or irritation of the chest, during the last fortnight or ten days. Love to all.—  
Good-bye, dear Nell, C. B.

# Letter 364

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

August 16th, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—Since I last wrote to you I have been getting on with my book as well as I can, and I think I may now venture to say that in a few weeks I hope to have the pleasure of placing the MS. in the hands of Mr. Smith.

The *North British Review* duly reached me. I read attentively all it says about *E. Wyndham*, *Jane Eyre*, and *F. Hervey*. Much of the article is clever, and yet there are remarks which—for me—rob it of importance.

To value praise or stand in awe of blame we must respect the source whence the praise and blame proceed, and I do not respect an inconsistent critic. He says, ‘if *Jane Eyre* be the production of a woman, she must be a woman unsexed.’

In that case the book is an unredeemed error and should be unreservedly condemned. *Jane Eyre* is a woman’s autobiography, by a woman it is professedly written. If it is written as no woman would write, condemn it with spirit and decision—say it is bad, but

do not eulogise and then detract. I am reminded of the *Economist*. The literary critic of that paper praised the book if written by a man, and pronounced it 'odious' if the work of a woman.

To such critics I would say, 'To you I am neither man nor woman—I come before you as an author only. It is the sole standard by which you have a right to judge me—the sole ground on which I accept your judgment.'

There is a weak comment, having no pretence either to justice or discrimination, on the works of Ellis and Acton Bell. The critic did not know that those writers had passed from time and life. I have read no review since either of my sisters died which I could have wished *them* to read—none even which did not render the thought of their departure more tolerable to me. To hear myself praised beyond them was cruel, to hear qualities ascribed to them so strangely the reverse of their real characteristics was scarce supportable. It is sad even now; but they are so remote from earth, so safe from its turmoils, I can bear it better.

But on one point do I now feel vulnerable; I should grieve to see my father's peace of mind perturbed on my account; for which reason I keep my author's existence as much as possible out of his way. I have always given him a carefully diluted and modified account of the success of *Jane Eyre*—just what would please without startling him. The book is not mentioned between us once a month. The *Quarterly* I kept to myself—it would have worried papa. To that same *Quarterly* I must speak in the introduction to my present work—just one little word. You once, I remember, said that the review was written by a lady—Miss Rigby. Are you sure of this?

Give no hint of my intention of discoursing a little with the *Quarterly*. It would look too important to speak of it beforehand. All plans are best conceived and executed without noise.  
—Believe me, yours sincerely, C. B.

## Letter 365

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*August 21st, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I can only write very briefly at present—first to thank you for your interesting letter and the graphic description it contained of the neighbourhood where you have been staying, and then to decide about the title of the book.

If I remember rightly, my Cornhill critics objected to *Hollow's Mill*, nor do I now find it appropriate. It might rather be called *Fieldhead*, though I think *Shirley* would perhaps be the best title. *Shirley*, I fancy, has turned out the most prominent and peculiar character in the work.

Cornhill may decide between *Fieldhead* and *Shirley*.—Believe me, yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 366

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*August 23rd, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Papa has not been well at all lately. He has had another attack of bronchitis. I felt very uneasy about him for some days, more wretched indeed than I care to tell you. After what has happened, one trembles at any appearance of sickness; and when anything ails papa, I feel too keenly that he is the *last*, the *only* near and dear relation I have in the world. Yesterday and to-day he has seemed much better, for which I am truly thankful.

For myself I should be pretty well, but for a continually recurring feeling of slight cold, slight hoarseness in the throat and chest, of which—do what I will—I cannot quite get rid. Has *your* cough entirely left you? I wish the atmosphere would return to a salubrious condition, for I really think it is not healthy. English cholera has been very prevalent here. I *do* wish to see you.

From what you say of Mr. Clapham, I think I should like him very much. Ann wants shaking to be put out about his appearance. What does it matter whether her husband dines in a dress-coat or a market-coat, provided there be worth, and honesty, and a clean shirt underneath?

I should like to make Ann a small present. Give me a hint what would be acceptable.

I suppose you have not yet heard anything more of poor Mr. Gorham. Does Rosy Ringrose continue to improve? How are Mrs. Atkinson and Mrs. Charles Carr? I am glad to hear that Miss Heald continues tolerable, but, as you say, it really seems wonderful. I hope Mercy will derive benefit from her excursion. Good-bye for the present. Write to me again soon. C. B.

With what remains after paying for the furs you must buy something for yourself to make your bride's-maid gear.

## Letter 367

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*August 24th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I think the best title for the book would be *Shirley*, without any explanation or addition—the simpler and briefer, the better.

If Mr. Taylor calls here on his return to town he might take charge of the MS.; I would rather intrust it to him than send it by the ordinary conveyance. Did I see Mr. Taylor when I was in London? I cannot remember him.

I would with pleasure offer him the homely hospitalities of the Parsonage for a few days, if I could at the same time offer him the company of a brother, or if my father were young enough and strong enough to walk with him on the moors and show him the neighbourhood, or if the peculiar retirement of papa's habits were not such as to render it irksome to him to give much of his society to a stranger, even in the house. Without being in the least misanthropical or sour-natured, papa habitually prefers solitude to society, and custom is a tyrant whose fetters it would now be impossible for him to break. Were it not for difficulties of this sort, I believe I should ere this have asked you to come down to Yorkshire. Papa, I know, would receive any friend of Mr. Smith's with perfect kindness and goodwill, but I likewise know that, unless greatly put out of his way, he could not give a guest much of his company, and that, consequently, his entertainment would be but dull.

You will see the force of these considerations, and understand why I only ask Mr. Taylor to come for a day instead of requesting the pleasure of his company for a longer period; you will believe me also, and so will he, when I say I shall be most happy to see him. He will find Haworth a strange, uncivilised little place, such as, I dare say, he never saw before. It is twenty miles distant from Leeds; he will have to come by rail to Keighley (there are trains every two hours I believe). He must remember that at a station called Shipley the carriages are changed, otherwise they will take him on to Skipton or Colne, or I know not where. When he reaches Keighley, he will yet have four miles to travel; a conveyance may be hired at the Devonshire Arms—there is no coach or other regular communication.

I should like to hear from him before he comes, and to know



on what day to expect him, that I may have the MS. ready ; if it is not quite finished I might send the concluding chapter or two by post.

I advise you to send this letter to Mr. Taylor—it will save you the trouble of much explanation, and will serve to apprise him of what lies before him ; he can then weigh well with himself whether it would suit him to take so much trouble for so slight an end.—Believe me, my dear sir, yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 368

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

August 29th, 1849.

DEAR SIR,—The book is now finished (thank God) and ready for Mr. Taylor, but I have not yet heard from him. I thought I should be able to tell whether it was equal to *Jane Eyre* or not, but I find I cannot—it may be better, it may be worse. I shall be curious to hear your opinion, my own is of no value. I send the Preface or ‘Word to the *Quarterly*’ for your perusal.

Whatever now becomes of the work, the occupation of writing it has been a boon to me. It took me out of dark and desolate reality into an unreal but happier region. The worst of it is, my eyes are grown somewhat weak and my head somewhat weary and prone to ache with close work. You can write nothing of value unless you give yourself wholly to the theme, and when you so give yourself you lose appetite and sleep—it cannot be helped.

At what time does Mr. Smith intend to bring the book out ? It is his now. I hand it and all the trouble and care and anxiety over to him—a good riddance, only I wish he fairly had it.—Yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 369

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

August 31st, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—I cannot change my preface. I can shed no tears before the public, nor utter any groan in the public ear. The deep, real tragedy of our domestic experience is yet terribly fresh in my mind and memory. It is not a time to be talked about to the indifferent ; it is not a topic for allusion to in print.

No righteous indignation can I lavish on the *Quarterly*. I can

condescend but to touch it with the lightest satire. Believe me, my dear sir, 'C. Brontë' must not here appear; what she feels or has felt is not the question—it is 'Currer Bell' who was insulted—he must reply. Let Mr. Smith fearlessly print the preface I have sent—let him depend upon me this once; even if I prove a broken reed, his fall cannot be dangerous: a preface is a short distance, it is not three volumes.

I have always felt certain that it is a deplorable error in an author to assume the tragic tone in addressing the public about his own wrongs or griefs. What does the public care about him as an individual? His wrongs are its sport; his griefs would be a bore. What we deeply feel is our own—we must keep it to ourselves. Ellis and Acton Bell were, for me, Emily and Anne; my sisters—to me intimately near, tenderly dear—to the public they were nothing—worse than nothing—beings speculated upon, misunderstood, misrepresented. If I live, the hour may come when the spirit will move me to speak of them, but it is not come yet. —I am, my dear sir, yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

### Letter 370

TO JAMES TAYLOR, CORNHILL

*September 3rd, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—It will be convenient to my father and myself to secure your visit on Saturday the 8th inst.

The MS. is now complete, and ready for you.

Trusting that you have enjoyed your holiday and derived from your excursion both pleasure and profit,—I am, dear sir, yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

### Letter 371

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*September 10th, 1849.*

DEAR SIR,—Your advice is very good, and yet I cannot follow it: I *cannot* alter now. It sounds absurd, but so it is.

The circumstances of Shirley's being nervous on such a matter may appear incongruous because I fear it is not well managed; otherwise it is perfectly natural. In such minds, such odd points, such queer unexpected inconsistent weaknesses *are* found—perhaps there never was an ardent poetic temperament, however healthy, quite without them; but they never communicate them

unless forced, they have a suspicion that the terror is absurd, and keep it hidden. Still the thing is badly managed, and I bend my head and expect in resignation what, *here*, I know I deserve—the lash of criticism. I shall wince when it falls, but not scream.

You are right about Goethe, you are very right—he is clear, deep, but very cold. I acknowledge him great, but cannot feel him genial.

You mention the literary coteries. To speak the truth, I recoil from them, though I long to see some of the truly great literary characters. However, this is not to be yet—I cannot sacrifice my incognito. And let me be content with seclusion—it has its advantages. In general, indeed, I am tranquil, it is only now and then that a struggle disturbs me—that I wish for a wider world than Haworth. When it is past, Reason tells me how unfit I am for anything very different.—Yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 372

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*September 10th, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—My piece of work is at last finished, and despatched to its destination. You must now tell me when there is a chance of your being able to come here. I fear it will now be difficult to arrange, as it is so near the marriage-day. Note well, it would spoil all my pleasure, if you put yourself or any one else to inconvenience to come to Haworth. But when it is *convenient*, I shall be truly glad to see you. I thought the patterns you sent charming, and all quite appropriate. . . . Papa, I am thankful to say, is better, though not strong. He is often troubled with a sensation of nausea. My cold is very much less troublesome, I am sometimes quite free from it. A few days since, I had a severe bilious attack, the consequence of sitting too closely to my writing; but it is gone now. It is the first from which I have suffered since my return from the seaside. I had them every month before. I hope you are pretty well and also your mother and sisters.—Yours sincerely, C. B.

## Letter 373

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*September 13th, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—If duty and the well-being of others require that you should stay at home, I cannot permit myself to complain,

still I am very, *very* sorry that circumstances will not permit us to meet just now. I would, without hesitation, come to Brookroyd, if papa were stronger! but uncertain as are both his health and spirits, I could not prevail on myself to leave him now. Let us hope that when we do see each other, our meeting will be all the more pleasurable for being delayed. Tell Mercy to keep up her spirits. I believe the general effect of the sea is to make people feel somewhat queer for the first fortnight or so after their return home. Dear Nell, you certainly have a heavy burden laid on your shoulders, but such burdens, if well borne, benefit the character; only we must take the *greatest, closest, most watchful* care not to grow proud of our strength, in case we should be enabled to bear up under the trial. That pride, indeed, would be a sign of radical weakness. The strength, if strength we have, is certainly never in our own selves; it is given us. Let me know when you go to Leeds, I will then commission you about the card-case. Would £1 buy a nice one? I should like it to be a really nice one. Amelia Ringrose wrote me a very kind note, which—shameful to say, I have not answered. She will form a bad opinion of me, and I deserve it. I was glad to hear that Rosy was better. I should be tempted to make a pet of that Rosy, to spoil her, and I dare say, like poor Martha Taylor, she might soon be spoiled. Engaging as I think her, I ascribe to her no great or profound qualities. Write to me when you find a corner of time. Remember me to your mother.—Yours,

C. B.

P.S.—Be as forbearing with Mercy as you can. I dare say there mixes in her feelings just now some little sense of bitterness that *she*, too, is not going to be married. It is a pity if such is the case, but for one of her habits of thought it is natural.

Poor Mr. Glinger's long and tedious illness prepares the survivors for the last scene; perhaps it may, but it is a painful preparation.

## Letter 374

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

September 13th, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—I want to know your opinion of the subject of this proof-sheet. Mr. Taylor censured it; he considers as defective all that portion which relates to Shirley's nervousness—the bite of a dog, etc. How did it strike you on reading it?

I ask this though I well know it cannot now be altered. I can



work indefatigably at the correction of a work before it leaves my hands, but when once I have looked on it as completed and submitted to the inspection of others, it becomes next to impossible to alter or amend. With the heavy suspicion on my mind that all may not be right, I yet feel forced to put up with the inevitably wrong.

Reading has, of late, been my great solace and recreation. I have read J. C. Hare's *Guesses at Truth*, a book containing things that in depth and far-sought wisdom sometimes recall the *Thoughts* of Pascal, only it is as the light of the moon recalls that of the sun.

I have read with pleasure a little book on *English Social Life* by the wife of Archbishop Whately. Good and intelligent women write well on such subjects. This lady speaks of governesses. I was struck by the contrast offered in her manner of treating the topic to that of Miss Rigby in the *Quarterly*. How much finer the feeling—how much truer the feeling—how much more delicate the mind here revealed!

I have read *David Copperfield*; it seems to me very good—admirable in some parts. You said it had affinity to *Jane Eyre*. It has, now and then—only what an advantage has Dickens in his varied knowledge of men and things! I am beginning to read Eckermann's *Goethe*—it promises to be a most interesting work. Honest, simple, single-minded Eckermann! Great, powerful, giant-souled, but also profoundly egotistical, old Johann Wolfgang von Goethe! He *was* a mighty egotist—I see he was: he thought no more of swallowing up poor Eckermann's existence in his own than the whale thought of swallowing Jonah.

The worst of reading graphic accounts of such men, of seeing graphic pictures of the scenes, the society, in which they moved, is that it excites a too tormenting longing to look on the reality. But does such reality now exist? Amidst all the troubled waters of European society does such a vast, strong, selfish, old Leviathan now roll ponderous! I suppose not.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 375

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

September 15th, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—You observed that the French of *Shirley* might be cavilled at. There is a long paragraph written in the French

language in that chapter entitled 'Le cheval dompté.' I forget the number. I fear it will have a pretentious air. If you deem it advisable and will return the chapter, I will efface and substitute something else in English.—Yours sincerely,

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

## Letter 376

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*September 17th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Your letter gave me great pleasure. An author who has showed his book to none, held no consultation about plan, subject, characters, or incidents, asked and had no opinion from one living being, but fabricated it darkly in the silent workshop of his own brain—such an author awaits with a singular feeling the report of the first impression produced by his creation in a quarter where he places confidence, and truly glad he is when that report proves favourable.

Do you think this book will tend to strengthen the idea that Currer Bell is a woman, or will it favour a contrary opinion?

I return the proof-sheets. Will they print all the French phrases in italics? I hope not, it makes them look somehow obtrusively conspicuous.

I have no time to add more lest I should be too late for the post.—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 377

TO JAMES TAYLOR, CORNHILL

*September 20th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—It is time I answered the note which I received from you last Thursday; I should have replied to it before had I not been kept more than usually engaged by the presence of a clergyman in the house, and the indisposition of one of our servants.

As you may conjecture, it cheered and pleased me much to learn that the opinion of my friends in Cornhill was favourable to *Shirley*—that, on the whole, it was considered no falling off from *Jane Eyre*. I am trying, however, not to encourage too sanguine an expectation of a favourable reception by the public: the seeds of prejudice have been sown, and I suppose the produce will have to be reaped—but we shall see.

I read with pleasure *Friends in Council*, and with very great pleasure *The Thoughts and Opinions of a Statesman*. It is the record of what may with truth be termed a beautiful mind—serene, harmonious, elevated, and pure; it bespeaks, too, a heart full of kindness and sympathy. I like it much.

Papa has been pretty well during the past week. He begs to join me in kind remembrances to yourself.—Believe me, my dear sir, yours very sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 378

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*September 21st, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I am obliged to you for preserving my secret, being at least as anxious as ever (*more* anxious I cannot well be) to keep quiet. You asked me in one of your letters lately whether I thought I should escape identification in Yorkshire. I am so little known that I think I shall. Besides, the book is far less founded on the Real than perhaps appears. It would be difficult to explain to you how little actual experience I have had of life, how few persons I have known, and how very few have known me.

As an instance how the characters have been managed take that of Mr. Helstone. If this character had an original it was in the person of a clergyman who died some years since at the advanced age of eighty. I never saw him except once—at the consecration of a church—when I was a child of ten years old. I was then struck with his appearance and stern, martial air. At a subsequent period I heard him talked about in the neighbourhood where he had resided: some mentioned him with enthusiasm, others with detestation. I listened to various anecdotes, balanced evidence against evidence, and drew an inference. The original of Mr. Hall I have seen; he knows me slightly; but he would as soon think I had closely observed him or taken him for a character—he would as soon, indeed, suspect me of writing a book—a novel—as he would his dog Prince. Margaret Hall called *Jane Eyre* a ‘wicked book,’ on the authority of the *Quarterly*; an expression which, coming from her, I will here confess, struck somewhat deep. It opened my eyes to the harm the *Quarterly* had done. Margaret would not have called it ‘wicked’ if she had not been told so.

No matter—whether known or unknown—misjudged or the contrary—I am resolved not to write otherwise. I shall bend as my powers tend. The two human beings who understood me, and whom I understood, are gone. I have some that love me yet, and whom I love without expecting, or having a right to expect, that they shall perfectly understand me. I am satisfied; but I must have my own way in the matter of writing. The loss of what we possess nearest and dearest to us in this world produces an effect upon the character: we search out what we have yet left that can support, and, when found, we cling to it with a hold of new-strung tenacity. The faculty of imagination lifted me when I was sinking, three months ago; its active exercise has kept my head above water since; its results cheer me now, for I feel they have enabled me to give pleasure to others. I am thankful to God, who gave me the faculty; and it is for me a part of my religion to defend this gift and to profit by its possession.—Yours sincerely,

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

## Letter 379

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*September 24th, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—You have to fight your way through labour and difficulty it appears, but I am truly glad now you did not come to Haworth. As matters have turned out, you would have found only discomfort and gloom. Both Tabby and Martha are at this moment ill in bed. Martha's illness has been most serious; she was seized with inflammation ten days ago. Tabby can neither stand nor walk. I have one of Martha's sisters, and her mother comes up sometimes. There was one day last week when I fairly broke down for ten minutes, sat and cried like a fool. Martha's illness was at its height, a cry from Tabby had called me into the kitchen and I found her laid on the floor, her head under the grate; she had fallen from her chair in attempting to rise. Papa had just been declaring that Martha was in imminent danger. I was myself depressed with headache and sickness. That day I hardly knew what to do, or where to turn. Thank God! Martha is now convalescent; Tabby, I trust, will be better soon. Papa is pretty well. I have the satisfaction of knowing that my publishers are delighted with what I sent



them. This supports. But life is a battle. May we all be enabled to fight it well.—Yours faithfully, C. B.

This letter reflects all the melancholy aspects of a home where comparative penury prevails. It is striking by the light of the opulence that would come to a novelist of our day who had written a book as successful as *Jane Eyre*. He or she would be certain not of £500, but at least of £5000, and a royalty on a second novel that would secure every personal comfort. Yet no particular blame can be attached to her publishers who, as the practices of the profession then were, seem to have treated her generously. At any rate there were no rival offers of large sums as would assuredly be the case to-day. Charlotte Brontë received fifteen hundred pounds in all for the copyright of her three novels, *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, and *Villette*. The manuscript of *Jane Eyre*, which has been preserved, would easily fetch a thousand pounds in the sale-rooms to-day. Some hundreds of pounds have been offered for it.

## Letter 380

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

September 28th, 1849.

DEAR ELLEN,—Martha is now almost well, and Tabby much better. A huge monster-package from ‘Nelson, Leeds,’ came yesterday. You want chastising roundly and soundly; such are the thanks for all your trouble.

I congratulate both you and Ann on the business being well over. May the married pair be happy and never regret their union! I see by the paper Mr. A—— is married at last, and poor R. T. is dead. Mr. G—— too, it seems, has done with this life and its sorrows; doubtless, likewise, he has exchanged its joys for a better and more perfect portion. Whenever you come to Haworth you shall certainly have a thorough drenching in your own shower-bath. I have not yet unpacked the wretch.—Yours, as you deserve, C. B.

## Letter 381

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*September 29th, 1849.*

DEAR SIR,—I have made the alteration; but I have made it to please Cornhill, not the public nor the critics.

I am sorry to say Newby does know my real name. I wish he did not, but that cannot be helped. Meantime, though I earnestly wish to preserve my incognito, I live under no slavish fear of discovery. I am ashamed of nothing I have written—not a line.

The envelope containing the first proof and your letter had been received open at the General Post Office and resealed there. Perhaps it was accident, but I think it better to inform you of the circumstance.—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 382

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*October 1st, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I am chagrined about the envelope being opened: I see it is the work of prying curiosity, and now it would be useless to make a stir—what mischief is to be apprehended is already done. It was not done at Haworth. I know the people of the post-office there, and am sure they would not venture on such a step; besides, the Haworth people have long since set me down as bookish and quiet, and trouble themselves no farther about me. But the gossiping inquisitiveness of small towns is rife at Keighley; there they are sadly puzzled to guess why I never visit, encourage no overtures to acquaintance, and always stay at home. Those packets passing backwards and forwards by the post have doubtless aggravated their curiosity. Well, I am sorry, but I shall try to wait patiently and not vex myself too much, come what will.

I am glad you like the English substitute for the French *devoir*.

The parcel of books came on Saturday. I write to Mr. Taylor by this post to acknowledge its receipt. His opinion of *Shirley* seems in a great measure to coincide with yours, only he expresses it rather differently to you, owing to the difference in your casts of mind. Are you not different on some points?—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 383

TO GEORGE SMITH

*October 4th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I must not *thank* you for, but acknowledge the receipt of, your letter. The business is certainly very bad ; worse than I thought, and much worse than my father has any idea of. In fact, the little railway property I possessed, according to original prices, formed already a small competency for me, with my views and habits. Now scarcely any portion of it can, with security, be calculated upon. I must open this view of the case to my father by degrees ; and, meanwhile, wait patiently till I see how affairs are likely to turn. . . . However the matter may terminate, I ought perhaps to be rather thankful than dissatisfied. When I look at my own case, and compare it with that of thousands besides, I scarcely see room for a murmur. Many, very many, are by the late strange railway system deprived almost of their daily bread. Such, then, as have only lost provision laid up for the future should take care how they complain. The thought that *Shirley* has given pleasure at Cornhill yields me much quiet comfort. No doubt, however, you are, as I am, prepared for critical severity ; but I have good hopes that the vessel is sufficiently sound of construction to weather a gale or two, and to make a prosperous voyage for you in the end.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 384

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*November 1st, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I reached home yesterday, and found your letter and one from Mr. Lewes, and one from the Peace Congress Committee, awaiting my arrival. The last document it is now too late to answer, for it was an invitation to Currer Bell to appear on the platform at their meeting at Exeter Hall last Tuesday ! A wonderful figure Mr. Currer Bell would have cut under such circumstances ! Should the ‘Peace Congress’ chance to read *Shirley* they will wash their hands of its author.

I am glad to hear that Mr. Thackeray is better, but I did not

know he had been seriously ill, I thought it was only a literary indisposition. You must tell me what he thinks of *Shirley* if he gives you any opinion on the subject.

I am also glad to hear that Mr. Smith is pleased with the commercial prospects of the work. I try not to be anxious about its literary fate; and if I cannot be quite stoical, I think I am still tolerably resigned.

Mr. Lewes does not like the opening chapter, wherein he resembles you.

I have permitted myself the treat of spending the last week with my friend Ellen. Her residence is in a far more populous and stirring neighbourhood than this. Whenever I go there I am unavoidably forced into society—clerical society chiefly.

During my late visit I have too often had reason, sometimes in a pleasant, sometimes in a painful form, to fear that I no longer walk invisible. *Jane Eyre*, it appears, has been read all over the district—a fact of which I never dreamt—a circumstance of which the possibility never occurred to me. I met sometimes with new deference, with augmented kindness: old schoolfellows and old teachers, too, greeted me with generous warmth. And again, ecclesiastical brows lowered thunder at me. When I confronted one or two large-made priests, I longed for the battle to come on. I wish they would speak out plainly. You must not understand that my schoolfellows and teachers were of the Clergy Daughters' School—in fact, I was never there but for one little year as a very little girl. I am certain I have long been forgotten; though for myself, I remember all and everything clearly: early impressions are ineffaceable.

I have just received the *Daily News*. Let me speak the truth—when I read it my heart sickened over it. It is not a good review, it is unutterably false. If *Shirley* strikes all readers as it has struck that one, but—I shall not say what follows.

On the whole I am glad a decidedly bad notice has come first—a notice whose inexpressible ignorance first stuns and then stirs me. Are there no such men as the Helstones and Yorkes?

Yes, there are.

Is the first chapter disgusting or vulgar?

*It is not, it is real.*

As for the praise of such a critic, I find it silly and nauseous, and I scorn it.

Were my sisters now alive they and I would laugh over this



notice ; but they sleep, they will wake no more for me, and I am a fool to be so moved by what is not worth a sigh.—Believe me,  
yours sincerely, C. B.

You must spare me if I seem hasty, I fear I really am not so firm as I used to be, nor so patient. Whenever any shock comes, I feel that almost all supports have been withdrawn.

## Letter 385

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*November 1st, '49.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I reached home safely about 3 o'clock. You too would have fine weather for your journey, to-day it is wet and foggy, so it is well I did not stay.

I found papa very well, Tabby better, and Martha quite fat and strong, for which state of things I was most thankful. Some letters were awaiting my arrival ; I enclose one for your perusal, which may perhaps amuse you. Send it back. All the house with one voice inquired after you. Also many questions were asked about the Bride. Be sure when you write to tell me how Amelia Ringrose is. In haste.—Yours, C. B.

I send two letters, one from the Peace Congress to Currer Bell ! The other from Williams.

## Letter 386

TO G. H. LEWES

*November 1st, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—It is about a year and a half since you wrote to me ; but it seems a longer period, because since then it has been my lot to pass some black milestones in the journey of life. Since then there have been intervals when I have ceased to care about literature and critics and fame ; when I have lost sight of whatever was prominent in my thoughts at the first publication of *Jane Eyre* ; but now I want these things to come back vividly, if possible : consequently it was a pleasure to receive your note. I wish you did not think me a woman. I wish all reviewers believed ‘Currer Bell’ to be a man ; they would be more just to him. You will, I know, keep measuring me by some standard of

what you deem becoming to my sex ; where I am not what you consider graceful you will condemn me. All mouths will be open against that first chapter, and that first chapter is as true as the Bible, nor is it exceptionable. Come what will, I cannot, when I write, think always of myself and of what is elegant and charming in femininity ; it is not on those terms, or with such ideas, I ever took pen in hand : and if it is only on such terms my writing will be tolerated, I shall pass away from the public and trouble it no more. Out of obscurity I came, to obscurity I can easily return. Standing afar off, I now watch to see what will become of *Shirley*. My expectations are very low, and my anticipations somewhat sad and bitter ; still, I earnestly conjure you to say honestly what you think ; flattery would be worse than vain ; there is no consolation in flattery. As for condemnation, I cannot, on reflection, see why I should much fear it ; there is no one but myself to suffer therefrom, and both happiness and suffering in this life soon pass away. Wishing you all success in your Scottish expedition,—I am, dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BELL.

## Letter 387

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*November 5th, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am afraid by Amelia's account you were sadly fagged with your expedition to Leeds with me. I shall be interested in hearing your account of the visit to Hunsworth.

The Station people in our part of the world have a strange notion of the proper plan of discharging their duties. My parcel of copies from London has been lying at Bradford for nearly a week. When I sent for it, they made answer there was none. It is only just now I have got it. I will (D.V.) send you two copies on Thursday, one for yourself and one for Mary Gorham. I shall order the parcel to be left at the Commercial Inn.

Hoping to hear from you soon again, I am, dear Nell, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

My chest has felt much better since I came home. I think change of air or weather occasioned greater irritation than usual while I was at Brookroyd. I think of you and Amelia often : sometimes I *do* wish I was near enough to step in and spend the evenings with you.

Letter 388

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

November 5th, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—I did not receive the parcel of copies till Saturday evening. Everything sent by Bradford is long in reaching me. It is, I think, better to direct: Keighley. I was very much pleased with the appearance and getting up of the book; it looks well.

I have got the *Examiner* and your letter. You are very good not to be angry with me, for I wrote in indignation and grief. The critic of the *Daily News* struck me as to the last degree incompetent, ignorant, and flippant. A thrill of mutiny went all through me when I read his small effusion. To be judged by such a one revolted me. I ought, however, to have controlled myself, and I did not. I am willing to be judged by the *Examiner*—I like the *Examiner*. Fonblanque has power, he has discernment—I bend to his censorship, I am grateful for his praise; his blame deserves consideration; when he approves, I permit myself a moderate emotion of pride. Am I wrong in supposing that critique to be written by Mr. Fonblanque? But whether it is by him or Forster, I am thankful.

In reading the critiques of the other papers—when I get them—I will try to follow your advice and preserve my equanimity. But I cannot be sure of doing this, for I had good resolutions and intentions before, and, you see, I failed.

You ask me if I am related to Nelson. No, I never heard that I was. The rumour must have originated in our name resembling his title. I wonder who that former schoolfellow of mine was that told Mr. Lewes, or how she had been enabled to identify Currer Bell with C. Brontë. She could not have been a Cowan Bridge girl, none of them can possibly remember me. They might remember my eldest sister, Maria; her prematurely-developed and remarkable intellect, as well as the mildness, wisdom, and fortitude of her character, *might* have left an indelible impression on some observant mind amongst her companions. My second sister, Elizabeth, too, may perhaps be remembered, but I cannot conceive that I left a trace behind me. My career was a very quiet one. I was plodding and industrious, perhaps I was very

grave, for I suffered to see my sisters perishing, but I think I was remarkable for nothing.—Believe, my dear sir, yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 389

TO JAMES TAYLOR, CORNHILL

*November 6th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I am afraid Mr. Williams told you I was sadly 'put out' about the *Daily News*, and I believe it is to that circumstance I owe your letters. But I have now made good resolutions, which were tried this morning by another notice in the same style in the *Observer*. The praise of such critics mortifies more than their blame; an author who becomes the object of it cannot help momentarily wishing he had never written. And to speak of the press being still ignorant of my being a woman! Why can they not be content to take Currer Bell for a man?

I imagined, mistakenly it now appears, that *Shirley* bore fewer traces of a female hand than *Jane Eyre*; that I have misjudged disappoints me a little, though I cannot exactly see where the error lies. You keep to your point about the curates. Since you think me to blame, you do right to tell me so. I rather fancy I shall be left in a minority of one on that subject.

I was indeed very much interested in the books you sent. Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe*, *Guesses at Truth*, *Friends in Council*, and the little work on English social life pleased me particularly, and the last not least. We sometimes take a partiality to books as to characters, not on account of any brilliant intellect or striking peculiarity they boast, but for the sake of something good, delicate, and genuine. I thought that small book the production of a lady, and an amiable, sensible woman, and I like it.

You must not think of selecting any more works for me yet, my stock is still far from exhausted.

I accept your offer respecting the *Athenæum*; it is a paper I should like much to see, providing you can send it without trouble. It shall be punctually returned.

Papa's health has, I am thankful to say, been very satisfactory



of late. The other day he walked to Keighley and back, and was very little fatigued. I am myself pretty well.

With thanks for your kind letter and good wishes,—Believe me,  
yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 390

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

November 15th, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received since I wrote last the *Globe*, *Standard of Freedom*, *Britannia*, *Economist*, and *Weekly Chronicle*.

How is *Shirley* getting on, and what is now the general feeling respecting the work?

As far as I can judge from the tone of the newspapers, it seems that those who were most charmed with *Jane Eyre* are the least pleased with *Shirley*; they are disappointed at not finding the same excitement, interest, stimulus; while those who spoke disparagingly of *Jane Eyre* like *Shirley* a little better than her predecessor. I suppose its dryer matter suits their dryer minds. But I feel that the fiat for which I wait does not depend on newspapers, except, indeed, such newspapers as the *Examiner*. The monthlies and quarterlies will pronounce it, I suppose. Mere novel-readers, it is evident, think *Shirley* something of a failure. Still, the majority of the notices have on the whole been favourable. That in the *Standard of Freedom* was very kindly expressed; and coming from a dissenter, William Howitt, I wonder thereat.

Are you satisfied at Cornhill, or the contrary? I have read part of *The Caxtons*, and, when I have finished, will tell you what I think of it; meantime, I should very much like to hear your opinion. Perhaps I shall keep mine till I see you, whenever that may be.

I am trying by degrees to inure myself to the thought of some day stepping over to Keighley, taking the train to Leeds, thence to London, and once more venturing to set foot in the strange, busy whirl of the Strand and Cornhill. I want to talk to you a little and to hear by word of mouth how matters are progressing. Whenever I come, I must come quietly and but for a short time—I should be unhappy to leave papa longer than a fortnight.—Believe me, yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 391

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

November 16th, 1849.

DEAR ELLEN,—Amelia's letter gave me a full and true account of your visit to Hunsworth. It was really very interesting and very well written. All the little details so nicely put in, making such a graphic whole. I can gather from it that she was an object of special attention. Joe Taylor has written to me to ask an opinion of Miss Ringrose. Perhaps you had better not tell her this. It might embarrass her painfully when he sees her again, and he is certain to call. I gave him a faithful opinion. I said she was what I called truly amiable, actively useful, genuinely good-natured, sufficiently sensible, neither unobservant nor without discrimination, but not highly intellectual, brilliant or profound. I did not, of course, say whether I thought she would suit him or not. I did not treat the subject as if I suspected he had any thoughts of her. I simply answered his question without the slightest comment.

You are not to suppose any of the characters in *Shirley* intended as literal portraits. It would not suit the rules of art, nor my own feelings, to write in that style. We only suffer reality to *suggest*, never to *dictate*. The heroines are abstractions, and the heroes also. Qualities I have seen, loved, and admired, are here and there put in as decorative gems, to be preserved in that setting. Since you say you could recognise the originals of all except the heroines, pray whom did you suppose the two Moores to represent? I send you a couple of reviews; the one in the *Examiner* is written by Albany Fonblanque, who is called the most brilliant political writer of the day, a man whose dictum is much thought of in London. The other, in the *Standard of Freedom*, is written by William Howitt, a Quaker! You must take care of the papers, bring them with you when you come to Haworth. I have some thoughts of getting my London trip over before you come, and then I shall have something to tell you. Amelia gives only a poor account of you. Take care of yourself. I have the dress-maker with me just now. I don't know how I shall like her. Her manners, etc., are not to my taste. Whether she is 'a good hand' I don't yet know. I should be pretty well, if it were not for headaches and indigestion. My chest has been better lately. Good-bye for the present.—Yours faithfully,

C. B.

Letter 392

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

November 19th, 1849.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am very sorry to hear that Mr. Taylor's illness has proved so much more serious than was anticipated, but I do hope he is now better. That he should be quite well cannot be as yet expected, for I believe rheumatic fever is a complaint slow to leave the system it has invaded.

Now that I have almost formed the resolution of coming to London, the thought begins to present itself to me under a pleasant aspect. At first it was sad; it recalled the last time I went and with whom, and to whom I came home, and in what dear companionship I again and again narrated all that had been seen, heard, and uttered in that visit. Emily would never go into any sort of society herself, and whenever I went I could on my return communicate to her a pleasure that suited her, by giving the distinct faithful impression of each scene I had witnessed. When pressed to go, she would sometimes say, ‘What is the use? Charlotte will bring it all home to me.’ And indeed I delighted to please her thus. My occupation is gone now.

I shall come to be lectured. I perceive you are ready with animadversion; you are not at all well satisfied on some points, so I will open my ears to hear, nor will I close my heart against conviction; but I forewarn you, I have my own doctrines, not acquired, but innate, some that I fear cannot be rooted up without tearing away all the soil from which they spring, and leaving only unproductive rock for new seed.

I have read the *Caxtons*, I have looked at *Fanny Hervey*, I think I will not write what I think of either—should I see you I will speak it.

Take a hundred, take a thousand of such works and weigh them in the balance against a page of Thackeray. I hope Mr. Thackeray is recovered.

The *Sun*, the *Morning Herald*, and the *Critic* came this morning. None of them express disappointment from *Shirley*, or on the whole compare her disadvantageously with *Jane*. It strikes me that those worthies—the *Athenæum*, *Spectator*, *Economist*, made haste to be first with their notices that they might give the tone; if so, their manœuvre has not yet quite succeeded.

The *Critic*, our old friend, is a friend still. Why does the pulse of pain beat in every pleasure? Ellis and Acton Bell are referred to, and where are they? I will not repine. Faith whispers they are not in those graves to which imagination turns—the feeling, thinking, the inspired natures are beyond earth, in a region more glorious. I believe them blessed. I think, I *will* think, my loss has been *their* gain. Does it weary you that I refer to them? If so, forgive me.—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

Before closing this I glanced over the letter enclosed under your cover. Did you read it? It is from a lady, not quite an old maid, but nearly one, she says; no signature or date; a queer but good-natured production, it made me half cry, half laugh. I am sure *Shirley* has been exciting enough for her, and too exciting. I cannot well reply to the letter since it bears no address, and I am glad—I should not know what to say. She is not sure whether I am a gentleman or not, but I fancy she thinks so. Have you any idea who she is? If I were a gentleman and like my heroes, she suspects she should fall in love with me. She had better not. It would be a pity to cause such a waste of sensibility. You and Mr. Smith would not let me announce myself as a single gentleman of mature age in my preface, but if you had permitted it, a great many elderly spinsters would have been pleased.

## Letter 393

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*November 20th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—You said that if I wished for any copies of *Shirley* to be sent to individuals I was to name the parties. I have thought of one person to whom I should much like a copy to be offered—Harriet Martineau. For her character—as revealed in her works—I have a lively admiration, a deep esteem. Will you enclose with the volume the accompanying note?

The letter you forwarded this morning was from Mrs. Gaskell, authoress of *Mary Barton*; she said I was not to answer it, but I cannot help doing so. The note brought the tears to my eyes. She is a good, she is a great woman. Proud am I that I can touch a chord of sympathy in souls so noble. In Mrs. Gaskell's nature it mournfully pleases me to fancy a remote affinity to my



sister Emily. In Miss Martineau's mind I have always felt the same, though there are wide differences. Both these ladies are above me—certainly far my superiors in attainments and experience. I think I could look up to them if I knew them.—I am,  
 dear sir, yours sincerely,  
 C. BRONTË.

## Letter 394

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*November 22nd, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—If it is discouraging to an author to see his work mouthed over by the entirely ignorant and incompetent, it is equally reviving to hear what you have written discussed and analysed by a critic who is master of his subject—by one whose heart feels, whose power grasps the matter he undertakes to handle. Such refreshment Eugène Forçade has given me. Were I to see that man, my impulse would be to say, ‘Monsieur, you know me, I shall deem it an honour to know you.’

I do not find that Forçade detects any coarseness in the work—it is for the smaller critics to find that out. The master in the art—the subtle-thoughted, keen-eyed, quick-feeling Frenchman, knows the true nature of the ingredients which went to the composition of the creation he analyses—he knows the true nature of things, and he gives them their right name.

Yours of yesterday has just reached me. Let me, in the first place, express my sincere sympathy with your anxiety on Mrs. Williams's account. I know how sad it is when pain and suffering attack those we love, when that mournful guest sickness comes and takes a place in the household circle. That the shadow may soon leave your home is my earnest hope.

Thank you for Sir J. Herschel's note. I am happy to hear Mr. Taylor is convalescent. It may, perhaps, be some weeks yet before his hand is well, but that his general health is in the way of re-establishment is a matter of thankfulness.

One of the letters you sent to-day addressed ‘Currer Bell’ has almost startled me. The writer first describes his family, and then proceeds to give a particular account of himself in colours the most candid, if not, to my ideas, the most attractive. He runs on in a strain of wild enthusiasm about *Shirley*, and concludes by announcing a fixed, deliberate resolution to institute

a search after Currer Bell, and sooner or later to find him out. There is power in the letter—talent; it is at times eloquently expressed. The writer somewhat boastfully intimates that he is acknowledged the possessor of high intellectual attainments, but, if I mistake not, he betrays a temper to be shunned, habits to be mistrusted. While laying claim to the character of being affectionate, warmhearted, and adhesive, there is but a single member of his own family of whom he speaks with kindness. He confesses himself indolent and wilful, but asserts that he is studious and, to some influences, docile. This letter would have struck me no more than the others rather like it have done, but for its rash power, and the disagreeable resolves it announces to seek and find Currer Bell. It almost makes me like a wizard who has raised a spirit he may find it difficult to lay. But I shall not think about it. This sort of fervour often foams itself away in words.

Trusting that the serenity of your home is by this time restored with your wife's health,—I am, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 395

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*November 22nd, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Amelia, in her last note, mentioned something to me unintelligible about a parcel containing 'Sydney wine,' which I was to receive from Bradford. I waited a day or two before I wrote, but as no such enigmatical parcel makes its appearance, I shall wait no longer.

*Shirley* works her way. The reviews shower in fast. I send you a couple more by this post. You may take care of them and bring with the others. The best critique which has yet appeared is in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, a sort of European cosmopolitan periodical, whose headquarters are at Paris. Comparatively few reviewers, even in their praise, evince a just comprehension of the author's meaning. Eugène Forçade, the reviewer in question, follows Currer Bell through every winding, discerns every point, discriminates every shade, proves himself master of the subject, and lord of the aim. With that man I would shake hands, if I saw him. I would say, 'You know me, Monsieur; I shall deem it an honour to know you.' I could not say so much to the mass of

London critics. Perhaps I could not say so much to five hundred men and women in all the millions of Great Britain. That matters little. My own conscience I satisfy first; and having done that, if I further content and delight a Forçade, a Fonblanque, and a Thackeray, my ambition has had its ration; it is fed; it lies down for the present satisfied: my faculties have wrought a day's task, and earned a day's wages. I am no teacher; to look on me in that light is to mistake me. To teach is not my vocation. What I *am*, it is useless to say. Those whom it concerns feel and find it out. To all others I wish only to be an obscure, steady-going, private character. To you, dear Nell, I wish to be a sincere friend. Give me your faithful regard; I willingly dispense with admiration. Offer my thanks to Amelia for her kind note. Say that such is my encroaching disposition I must have another from her before she gets an answer from me. My regards to your mother, Mercy, and the Claphams. . . . All you say agrees with my anticipations. They are scarcely suited.—Yours,

C. B.

## Letter 396

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

November 26th, '49.

DEAR ELLEN,—I return Mr. V.'s precious note; in my judgment you are quite dispensed from answering it, unless you feel so inclined. There is, indeed, nothing to answer save the very slight question about Mr. and Mrs. Clapham, for which he is not entitled to expect you should be at the trouble of taking pen and ink. It is like you to pronounce the reviews not good enough, and belongs to that part of your character which will not permit you to bestow unqualified approbation on any dress, decoration, etc., belonging to you. Know that the reviews are superb; and were I dissatisfied with them, I should be a conceited ape. Nothing higher is ever said, *from perfectly disinterested motives*, of any living author. Wealthy writers, who give dinners, and authors of rank, who have toadies in their train, may command a fulsome strain of flattery, but a mite of praise, bestowed on an unknown and obscure author, is worth raptures thus bought. If all be well, I go to London this week: Wednesday, I think. The dressmaker has done my small matters pretty well, but I wish you could have looked over them, and given a

dictum. I insisted on the dresses being made quite plainly. The box will come sometime doubtless, but is not come yet. If it is a present from Joe Taylor, explain to him when you see him, why he has not been thanked.—Yours in some haste,

C. B.

## Letter 397

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*November 29th, 1849.*

DEAR SIR,—I inclose two notes for postage. The note you sent yesterday was from Harriet Martineau; its contents were more than gratifying. I ought to be thankful, and I trust I am for such testimonies of sympathy from the first order of minds. When Mrs. Gaskell tells me she shall keep my works as a treasure for her daughters, and when Harriet Martineau testifies affectionate approbation, I feel the sting taken from the strictures of another class of critics. My resolution of seclusion withholds me from communicating further with these ladies at present, but I now know how they are inclined to me—I know how my writings have affected their wise and pure minds. The knowledge is present support and, perhaps, may be future armour.

I trust Mrs. Williams's health and, consequently, your spirits are by this time quite restored. If all be well, perhaps I shall see you next week.—Yours sincerely

C. BRONTË.



## CHAPTER XXII

## LITERARY RECOGNITION

IF no great pecuniary reward was destined to attach to Charlotte Brontë's efforts as an author, she received in fullest measure the recognition of her great contemporaries in literature, and particularly of Thackeray. The devotion of Charlotte Brontë to Thackeray, or rather to Thackeray's genius, is a pleasant episode in literary history. In 1848 he sent Miss Brontë, as we have seen, a copy of *Vanity Fair*. In 1852 he sent her a copy of *Esmond*, with the more cordial inscription which came of friendship.

Miss Brontë .  
with W. M. Thackeray's grateful regards .

October 28 . 1852 .

The second edition of *Jane Eyre* was dedicated to him as possessed of 'an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have recognised,' and as 'the first social regenerator of the day.' And when Currer Bell was dead, it was Thackeray who wrote by far the most eloquent tribute to her memory. When a copy of Lawrence's portrait of Thackeray<sup>1</sup> was sent to Haworth by Mr. George Smith, Charlotte Brontë stood in front of it and, half playfully, half seriously, shook her fist, apostrophising its original as 'Thou Titan!'

With all this hero-worship, it may be imagined that no

<sup>1</sup> Now in the possession of Mrs. A. B. Nicholls.

favourable criticism gave her more unqualified pleasure than that which came from her 'master,' as she was not indisposed to consider one who was only seven years her senior, and whose best books were practically contemporaneous with her own. People had indeed suggested that *Jane Eyre* might have been written by Thackeray under a pseudonym; others had implied, knowing that there was 'something about a woman' in Thackeray's life, that it was written by a mistress of the great novelist. Indeed, the *Quarterly* had half hinted as much. Curren Bell, knowing nothing of the gossip of London, had dedicated her book in single-minded enthusiasm. Her distress was keen when it was revealed to her that the wife of Mr. Thackeray, like the wife of Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, was of unsound mind.<sup>1</sup>

It cannot be said that Charlotte Brontë and Thackeray gained by personal contact. 'With him I was painfully stupid,' she says. It was the case of Heine and Goethe over again. Heine in the presence of the king of German literature could talk only of the plums in his garden. Charlotte Brontë in the presence of her hero Thackeray could not express herself with the vigour and intelligence which belonged to her correspondence with Mr. Williams. Miss Brontë, again, was hypercritical of the smaller vanities of men, and, as has been pointed out, she emphasised in *Villette* a trivial piece of not unpleasant egotism on Thackeray's part after a lecture—his asking her if she had liked it. This question, which nine men out of ten would be prone to ask of a woman friend, was 'over-eagerness' and 'naïveté' in her eyes. Thackeray, on his side, found

<sup>1</sup> Thackeray writes to Mr. Brookfield, in October 1848, as follows:—'Old Dilke of the *Athenæum* vows that Procter and his wife, between them, wrote *Jane Eyre*; and when I protest ignorance, says, 'Pooh! you know who wrote it—you are the deepest rogue in England, etc.' I wonder whether it can be true? It is just possible. And then what a singular circumstance is the + fire of the two dedications' [*Jane Eyre* to Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* to Barry Cornwall].—*A Collection of Letters to W. M. Thackeray, 1847-1855*. Smith and Elder.

conversation difficult, if we may judge by a reminiscence by his daughter Lady Ritchie :—

One of the most notable persons who ever came into our bow-windowed drawing-room in Young Street is a guest never to be forgotten by me—a tiny, delicate, little person, whose small hand nevertheless grasped a mighty lever which set all the literary world of that day vibrating. I can still see the scene quite plainly—the hot summer evening, the open windows, the carriage driving to the door as we all sat silent and expectant; my father, who rarely waited, waiting with us; our governess and my sister and I all in a row, and prepared for the great event. We saw the carriage stop, and out of it sprang the active, well-knit figure of Mr. George Smith, who was bringing Miss Brontë to see our father. My father, who had been walking up and down the room, goes out into the hall to meet his guests, and then, after a moment's delay, the door opens wide, and the two gentlemen come in, leading a tiny, delicate, serious, little lady, pale, with fair straight hair, and steady eyes. She may be a little over thirty; she is dressed in a little *barège* dress, with a pattern of faint green moss. She enters in mittens, in silence, in seriousness; our hearts are beating with wild excitement. This, then, is the authoress, the unknown power whose books have set all London talking, reading, speculating; some people even say our father wrote the books—the wonderful books. To say that we little girls had been given *Jane Eyre* to read scarcely represents the facts of the case; to say that we had taken it without leave, read bits here and read bits there, been carried away by an undreamed-of and hitherto unimagined whirlwind into things, times, places, all utterly absorbing, and at the same time absolutely unintelligible to us, would more accurately describe our state of mind on that summer's evening as we look at Jane Eyre—the great Jane Eyre—the tiny little lady. The moment is so breathless that dinner comes as a relief to the solemnity of the occasion, and we all smile as my father stoops to offer his arm; for, though genius she may be, Miss Brontë can barely reach his elbow. My own personal impressions are that she is somewhat grave and stern, especially to forward little girls who wish to chatter. Mr. George Smith has since told me how she afterwards remarked upon my father's wonderful forbearance and gentleness

Lady  
Ritchie's  
Narrative.

with our uncalled-for incursions into the conversation. She sat gazing at him with kindling eyes of interest, lighting up with a sort of illumination every now and then as she answered him. I can see her bending forward over the table, not eating, but listening to what he said as he carved the dish before him.

I think it must have been on this very occasion that my father invited some of his friends in the evening to meet Miss Brontë—for everybody was interested and anxious to see her. Mrs. Crowe, the reciter of ghost-stories, was there. Mrs. Brookfield, Mrs. Carlyle, Mr. Carlyle himself was present, so I am told, railing at the appearance of cockneys upon Scotch mountain sides; there were also too many Americans for his taste, 'but the Americans were as gods compared to the cockneys,' says the philosopher. Besides the Carlyles, there were Mrs. Elliott and Miss Perry, Mrs. Procter and her daughter, most of my father's habitual friends and companions. In the recent life of Lord Houghton I was amused to see a note quoted in which Lord Houghton also was convened. Would that he had been present—perhaps the party would have gone off better. It was a gloomy and a silent evening. Every one waited for the brilliant conversation which never began at all. Miss Brontë retired to the sofa in the study, and murmured a low word now and then to our kind governess, Miss Truelock. The room looked very dark, the lamp began to smoke a little, the conversation grew dimmer and more dim, the ladies sat round still expectant, my father was too much perturbed by the gloom and the silence to be able to cope with it at all. Mrs. Brookfield, who was in the doorway by the study, near the corner in which Miss Brontë was sitting, leant forward with a little commonplace, since brilliance was not to be the order of the evening. 'Do you like London, Miss Brontë?' she said; another silence, a pause, then Miss Brontë answers, 'Yes and No,' very gravely. Mrs. Brookfield has herself reported the conversation. My sister and I were much too young to be bored in those days; alarmed, impressed we might be, but not yet bored. A party was a party, a lioness was a lioness; and—shall I confess it?—at that time an extra dish of biscuits was enough to mark the evening. We felt all the importance of the occasion: tea spread in the dining-room, ladies in the drawing-room. We roamed about inconveniently, no doubt, and excitedly, and in one of my incursions crossing the hall, after Miss Brontë had left, I was surprised to see my father opening the front door with



his hat on. He put his fingers to his lips, walked out into the darkness, and shut the door quietly behind him. When I went back to the drawing-room again, the ladies asked me where he was. I vaguely answered that I thought he was coming back. I was puzzled at the time, nor was it all made clear to me till long years afterwards, when one day Mrs. Procter asked me if

knew what had happened once when my father had invited a party to meet Jane Eyre at his house. It was one of the duller evenings she had ever spent in her life, she said. And then with a good deal of humour she described the situation—the ladies who had all come expecting so much delightful conversation, and the gloom and the constraint, and how, finally, overwhelmed by the situation, my father had quietly left the room, left the house, and gone off to his club. The ladies waited, wondered, and finally departed also; and as we were going up to bed with our candles after everybody was gone, I remember two pretty Miss L——s, in shiny silk dresses, arriving, full of expectation. . . . We still said we thought our father would soon be back, but the Miss L——s declined to wait upon the chance, laughed, and drove away again almost immediately.<sup>1</sup>

Charlotte Brontë stayed with but two friends in London, with her publisher, Mr. George Smith, and his mother, and at 29 Phillimore Gardens, Kensington, with Dr. Wheelwright, and his daughter Lætitia, who had been Charlotte's great friend in Brussels. Mr. Smith died quite recently. He survived until 1905 to reign over the famous house which introduced Thackeray, John Ruskin, and Charlotte Brontë to the world. What Charlotte Brontë thought of him may be gathered from her frank acknowledgment that he was the original of Dr. John in *Villette*, as his mother was the original of Mrs. Bretton—perhaps the two most entirely charming characters in Charlotte Brontë's novels. Mrs. Smith and her son lived, at the beginning of the friendship, at Westbourne Place, but afterwards removed to Gloucester Terrace, and

<sup>1</sup> *Chapters from Some Memories*, by Annie Thackeray Ritchie. Macmillan and Co. Lady Ritchie and her publishers kindly permit me to incorporate her interesting reminiscence in this chapter.

Charlotte stayed with them at both houses. It was from the former that this first letter was addressed.

## Letter 398

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

WESTBOURNE PLACE, BISHOP'S ROAD,  
LONDON, *December* 1849.

DEAR ELLEN,—I have just remembered that as you do not know my address, you cannot write to me till you get it; it is as above. I came to this big Babylon last Thursday, and have been in what seems to me a sort of whirl ever since, for changes, scenes, and stimulus which would be a trifle to others, are much to me. I found when I mentioned to Mr. Smith my plan of going to Dr. Wheelwright's it would not do at all, he would have been seriously hurt; he made his mother write to me, and thus I was persuaded to make my principal stay at his house. I have found no reason to regret this decision. Mrs. Smith received me at first like one who had received the strictest orders to be scrupulously attentive. I had fires in my bedroom evening and morning, wax candles, etc., etc. Mrs. Smith and her daughters seemed to look upon me with a mixture of respect and alarm. But all this is changed, that is to say, the attention and politeness continue as great as ever, but the alarm and estrangement are quite gone. She treats me as if she liked me, and I begin to like her much; kindness is a potent heartwinner. I had not judged too favourably of her son on a first impression; he pleases me much. I like him better even as a son and brother than as a man of business. Mr. Williams, too, is really most gentlemanly and well-informed. His weak points he certainly has, but these are not seen in society. Mr. Taylor—the little man—has again shown his parts; in fact, I suspect he is of the Helstone order of men—rigid, despotic, and self-willed. He tries to be very kind and even to express sympathy sometimes, but he does not manage it. He has a determined, dreadful nose in the middle of his face which when poked into my countenance cuts into my soul like iron. Still he is horribly intelligent, quick, searching, sagacious, and with a memory of relentless tenacity. To turn to Williams after him, or to Smith himself, is to turn from granite to easy down or warm fur. I have seen Thackeray.

No more at present from yours, etc.,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 399

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

LONDON, *December 10th*, 1849.

DEAR ELLEN,—I was very glad to get the two notes from Brookroyd, yours and Amelia's. I am only going to pen a very hasty reply now, as there are several people in the room and I cannot write in company. You seem to suppose I must be very happy, dear Nell, and I see you have twenty romantic notions in your head about me. These last you may dismiss at once. As to being happy, I am under scenes and circumstances of excitement; but I suffer acute pain sometimes, mental pain, I mean. At the moment Mr. Thackeray presented himself, I was thoroughly faint from inanition, having eaten nothing since a very slight breakfast, and it was then *seven* o'clock in the evening. Excitement and exhaustion together made savage work of me that evening. What he thought of me I cannot tell. This evening I am going to meet Miss Martineau. She has written to me most kindly. She knows me only as Currer Bell. I am going alone in the carriage; how I shall get on I do not know. If Mrs. Smith were not kind, I should sometimes be miserable, but she treats me almost affectionately, her attentions never flag.

I have seen many things. I hope some day to tell you what. Yesterday I went over the New Houses of Parliament with Mr. Williams. An attack of rheumatic fever has kept poor Mr. Taylor out of the way since I wrote last. I am sorry for his sake. It grows quite dark. I must stop. I shall not stay in London a day longer than I first intended. On those points I form my resolutions and will not be shaken.

The thundering *Times* has attacked me savagely.—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

*Sunday*.—Love to Amelia, and thanks. I can hardly tell what to say about her and J. T. I do not like to think about it; I shudder sometimes.

One of the most interesting of her new friends was Harriet Martineau. Before leaving Haworth she had had a copy of her book sent to Harriet Martineau with the following note enclosed:—

‘Currer Bell offers a copy of *Shirley* to Miss Martineau's

acceptance, in acknowledgment of the pleasure and profit ~~she~~ (*sic*) he has derived from her works. When C. B. first read *Deerbrook* he tasted a new and keen pleasure, and experienced a genuine benefit. In his mind *Deerbrook* ranks with the writings that have really done him good, added to his stock of ideas and rectified his views of life.’<sup>1</sup>

Miss Martineau replied, addressing her letter to ‘Curren Bell, Esq.,’ but beginning it ‘Dear Madam.’ On December 8 she received a letter signed ‘Curren Bell,’ saying that the writer was in town and desired to see her. Miss Martineau has left an amusing account of the interview, the arrival of a male visitor six feet high, whom some of her friends believed to be the new author, and finally the appearance of ‘Miss Brontë,’ whom the footman announced as ‘Miss Brogden.’ ‘I thought her the smallest creature I had ever seen, except at a fair,’ was Miss Martineau’s first impression.

## Letter 400

TO LÆTITIA WHEELWRIGHT

HAWORTH, KEIGHLEY, *December 17th*, 1849.

MY DEAR LÆTITIA,—I have just time to save the post by writing a brief note. I reached home safely on Saturday afternoon, and, I am thankful to say, found papa quite well.

The evening after I left you passed better than I expected. Thanks to my substantial lunch and cheering cup of coffee, I was able to wait the eight o’clock dinner with complete resignation, and to endure its length quite courageously, nor was I too much exhausted to converse; and of this I was glad, for otherwise I know my kind host and hostess would have been much disappointed. There were only seven gentlemen at dinner besides Mr. Smith, but of these, five were critics—a formidable band, including the literary Rhadamanthi of the *Times*, the *Athenæum*, the *Examiner*, the *Spectator*, and the *Atlas*: men more

<sup>1</sup> Harriet Martineau’s *Autobiography*, vol. ii.



dreaded in the world of letters than you can conceive. I did not know how much their presence and conversation had excited me till they were gone, and then reaction commenced. When I had retired for the night I wished to sleep; the effort to do so was vain—I could not close my eyes. Night passed, morning came, and I rose without having known a moment's slumber. So utterly worn out was I when I got to Derby, that I was obliged to stay there all night.

The post is going. Give my affectionate love to your mamma, Emily, Fanny, and Sarah Anne. Remember me respectfully to your papa, and—Believe me, dear Lætitia, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 401

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*December 19th, 1849.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I am again at home; and after the first sensations consequent on returning to a place more dumb and vacant than it once was, I am beginning to feel settled. I think the contrast with London does not make Haworth more desolate; on the contrary, I have gleaned ideas, images, pleasant feelings, such as may perhaps cheer many a long winter evening.

You ask my opinion of your daughters. I wish I could give you one worth acceptance. A single evening's acquaintance does not suffice with me to form an *opinion*, it only leaves on my mind an *impression*. They impressed me, then, as pleasing in manners and appearance: Ellen's is a character to which I could soon attach myself, and Fanny and Louisa have each their separate advantages. I can, however, read more in a face like Mrs Williams's than in the smooth young features of her daughters—time, trial, and exertion write a distinct hand, more legible than smile or dimple. I was told you had once some thoughts of bringing out Fanny as a professional singer, and it was added Fanny did not like the project. I thought to myself, if she does not like it, it can never be successfully executed. It seems to me that to achieve triumph in a career so arduous, the artist's own bent to the course must be inborn, decided, resistless. There should be no urging, no goading; native genius and vigorous will should lend their wings to the aspirant—nothing less can lift her to real fame, and who would rise feebly only to fall ignobly? An

inferior artist, I am sure, you would not wish your daughter to be, and if she is to stand in the foremost rank, only her own courage and resolve can place her there ; so, at least, the case appears to me. Fanny probably looks on publicity as degrading, and I believe that for a woman it is degrading if it is not glorious. If I could not be a Lind, I would not be a singer.

Brief as my visit to London was, it must for me be memorable. I sometimes fancied myself in a dream—I could scarcely credit the reality of what passed. For instance, when I walked into the room and put my hand into Miss Martineau's, the action of saluting her and the fact of her presence seemed visionary. Again, when Mr. Thackeray was announced, and I saw him enter, looked up at his tall figure, heard his voice, the whole incident was truly dream-like, I was only certain it was true because I became miserably destitute of self-possession. *Amour propre* suffers terribly under such circumstances : woe to him that thinks of himself in the presence of intellectual greatness ! Had I not been obliged to speak, I could have managed well, but it behoved me to answer when addressed, and the effort was torture—I spoke stupidly.

As to the band of critics, I cannot say they overawed me much ; I enjoyed the spectacle of them greatly. The two contrasts, Forster and Chorley, have each a certain edifying carriage and conversation good to contemplate. I by no means dislike Mr. Forster—quite the contrary, but the distance from his loud swagger to Thackeray's simple port is as the distance from Shakespeare's writing to Macready's acting.

Mr. Chorley tantalised me. He is a peculiar specimen—one whom you could set yourself to examine, uncertain whether, when you had probed all the small recesses of his character, the result would be utter contempt and aversion, or whether for the sake of latent good you would forgive obvious evil. One could well pardon his unpleasant features, his strange voice, even his very foppery and grimace, if one found these disadvantages connected with living talent and any spark of genuine goodness. If there is nothing more than acquirement, smartness, and the affectation of philanthropy, Chorley is a fine creature.

Remember me kindly to your wife and daughters, and—Believe me, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 402

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *December 19th, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Here I am at Haworth once more. I feel as if I had come out of an exciting whirl. Not that the hurry or stimulus would have seemed much to one accustomed to society and change, but to me they were very marked. My strength and spirits too often proved quite insufficient for the demand on their exertions. I used to bear up as well and as long as I possibly could, for, whenever I flagged, I could see Mr. Smith became disturbed; he always thought that something had been said or done to annoy me, which never once happened, for I met with perfect good-breeding even from antagonists, men who had done their best or worst to write me down. I explained to him, over and over again, that my occasional silence was only failure of the power to talk, never of the will, but still he always seemed to fear there was another cause underneath.

Mrs. Smith is rather stern, but she has sense and discrimination; she watched me very narrowly when surrounded by gentlemen, she never took her eye from me. I liked the surveillance, both when it kept guard over me amongst many, or only with her cherished one. She soon, I am convinced, saw in what light I received all, Thackeray included. Her 'George' is a very fine specimen of a young English man-of-business; so I regard him, and I am proud to be one of his props.

Thackeray is a Titan of mind. His presence and powers impress me deeply in an intellectual sense; I do not see him or know him as a man. All the others are subordinate to these. I have esteem for some, and, I trust, courtesy for all. I do not, of course, know what they thought of me, but I believe most of them expected me to come out in a more marked, eccentric, striking light. I believe they desired more to admire and more to blame. I felt sufficiently at my ease with all except Thackeray; and with him I was painfully stupid.

Now, dear Nell, when can you come to Haworth? Settle and let me know as soon as you can. Give my best love to all. I enclose a word for Amelia. Have things come to any crisis in that quarter? I cannot help thinking of the lion mated with the

lamb, the leopard with the kid. It does not content me. The first year or two may be well enough. I do not like to look forward any farther. Let nothing prevent you from coming.—Yours, C. B.

### Letter 403

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*December 22nd, 1849.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I should have answered yours yesterday, had I not received by the same post a missive from Joseph Taylor announcing that he was coming to dinner that blessed day, and shortly after he made his appearance. This errand was to persuade me to go to Birmingham to spend Christmas at Hay Hall with the Dixons. Of course I could not go. He stayed till about 6 o'clock—he talked a good deal. . . . I don't think it will make the least difference with him. He had written to me a few days before, explaining the degree and sort of interest he took in Amelia; I will show you the letter when you come.

Let nothing prevent you from coming on Thursday. There is a train leaves Bradford at a quarter past twelve and arrives at Keighley about thirty-four minutes past, perhaps you had better come by that. I will send a gig to meet you if possible; if I cannot get one you must hire a conveyance at the Devonshire Arms—don't walk. Joe Taylor says he will come here again while you are with me, after he has been to Tranby and knows his doom.

C. B.

### Letter 404

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*December '49.*

DEAR ELLEN,—As papa appears to be pretty well just now, and as Martha is likewise quite recovered, I think I really should like to come to you for a few days. Could you without inconvenience meet me at Leeds on Tuesday morning, about 12 o'clock? I ask this because I find I really must go to Mr. Atkinson the dentist, and ask him if he can do anything for my tic, and I thought I might as well get the pleasant errand over on my way to Brookroyd. I have some other trifling matters to look after likewise, but I should have wished to consult you about them beforehand, and if you think I had better go from Brookroyd to Leeds, or if it would inconvenience you to meet me there, say so, and I will come by Bradford. If you write by return of post,



I shall get your note on Monday morning and shall know how to arrange.

Give my kind regards to all and believe me yours sincerely,  
C. B.

### Letter 405

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*January 3rd, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of the *Morning Chronicle* with a good review, and of the *Church of England Quarterly* and the *Westminster* with bad ones. I have also to thank you for your letter, which would have been answered sooner had I been alone; but just now I am enjoying the treat of my friend Ellen's society, and she makes me indolent and negligent—I am too busy talking to her all day to do anything else. You allude to the subject of female friendships, and express wonder at the infrequency of sincere attachments amongst women. As to married women, I can well understand that they should be absorbed in their husbands and children—but single women often like each other much, and derive great solace from their mutual regard. Friendship, however, is a plant which cannot be forced. True friendship is no gourd, springing in a night and withering in a day. When I first saw Ellen I did not care for her; we were schoolfellows. In course of time we learnt each other's faults and good points. We were contrasts—still, we suited. Affection was first a germ, then a sapling, then a strong tree—now, no new friend, however lofty or profound in intellect—not even Miss Martineau herself—could be to me what Ellen is; yet she is no more than a conscientious, observant, calm, well-bred Yorkshire girl. She is without romance. If she attempts to read poetry, or poetic prose, aloud, I am irritated and deprive her of the book—if she talks of it, I stop my ears; but she is good; she is true; she is faithful, and I love her.

Since I came home, Miss Martineau has written me a long and truly kindly letter. She invites me to visit her at Ambleside. I like the idea. Whether I can realise it or not, it is pleasant to have in prospect.

You ask me to write to Mrs. Williams. I would rather she wrote to me first; and let her send any kind of letter she likes, without studying mood or manner.—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

Miss Wheelwright and her sisters well remember certain episodes in connection with these London visits. They recall Charlotte's anxiety and trepidation at the prospect of meeting Thackeray. They recollect her simple, dainty dress, her shy demeanour, her absolutely unspoiled character. They tell me it was in the *Illustrated London News*, about the time of the publication of *Shirley*, that they first learnt that Currer Bell and Charlotte Brontë were one. They would, however, have known that *Shirley* was by a Brussels pupil, they declared, from the absolute resemblance of Hortense Moore to one of their governesses—Mlle. Haussé.

Meanwhile the excitement which *Shirley* was exciting in Currer Bell's home circle was not confined to the curates. Here is a letter which Canon Heald (Cyril Hall) wrote at this time :—

### Letter 406

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BIRSTALL, NEAR LEEDS,  
January 8th, 1850.

DEAR ELLEN,—Fame says you are on a visit with the renowned Currer Bell, the 'great unknown' of the present day. The celebrated *Shirley* has just found its way hither. And as one always reads a book with more interest when one has a correct insight into the writer's designs, I write to ask a favour, which I ought not to be regarded as presumptuous in saying that I think I have a species of claim to ask, on the ground of a sort of 'poetical justice.' The interpretation of this enigma is, that the story goes that either I or my father, I do not exactly know which, are part of 'Currer Bell's' stock-in-trade, under the title of Mr. Hall, in that Mr. Hall is represented as black, bilious, and of dismal aspect, stooping a trifle, and indulging a little now and then in the indigenous dialect. This seems to sit very well on your humble servant—other traits do better for my good father than myself. However, though I had no idea that I should be made a means to amuse the public, Currer Bell is perfectly welcome to what she can make of so unpromising a subject. But I think *I have a fair*

*claim in return to be let into the secret of the company I have got into.* Some of them are good enough to tell, and need no Œdipus to solve the riddle. I can tabulate, for instance, the Yorke family for the Taylors, Mr. Moore—Mr. Cartwright, and Mr. Helstone is clearly meant for Mr. Roberson, though the authoress has evidently got her idea of his character through an unfavourable medium, and does not understand the full value of one of the most admirable characters I ever knew or expect to know. Mary thinks she descries Cecilia Crowther and Miss Johnstone (afterwards Mrs. Westerman) in two old maids.

Now pray get us a full light on all other names and localities that are adumbrated in this said *Shirley*. When some of the prominent characters will be recognised by every one who knows our quarters, there can be no harm in letting one know who may be intended by the rest. And, if necessary, I will bear Currer Bell harmless, and not let the world know that I have my intelligence from headquarters. As I said before, I repeat now, that as I or mine are part of the stock-in-trade, I think I have an equitable claim to this intelligence, by way of my dividend. Mary and Harriet wish also to get at this information; and the latter at all events seems to have her own peculiar claim, as fame says she is 'in the book' too. One had need 'walk . . . warily in these dangerous days,' when, as Burns (is it not he?) says—

'A chield's among you taking notes,  
And faith he'll prent it.'—

Yours sincerely,

W. M. HEALD.

Mary and Harriet unite with me in the best wishes of the season to you and C—— B——. Pray give my best respects to Mr. Brontë also, who may have some slight remembrance of me as a child. I just remember him when at Hartshead.<sup>1</sup>

## Letter 407

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*January 10th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Mrs. Ellis has made 'her morning call.' I rather relished her chat about *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre*. She praises reluctantly and blames too often affectedly. But when—

<sup>1</sup> Printed by the kind permission of the Rev. C. W. Heald, of Chale, I.W.

ever a reviewer betrays that he has been thoroughly influenced and stirred by the work he criticises, it is easy to forgive the rest—hate and personality excepted.

I have received and perused the *Edinburgh Review*—it is very brutal and savage. I am not angry with Lewes, but I wish in future he would let me alone, and not write again what makes me feel so cold and sick as I am feeling just now.

Thackeray's Christmas Book at once grieved and pleased me, as most of his writings do. I have come to the conclusion that whenever he writes, Mephistopheles stands on his right hand and Raphael on his left; the great doubter and sneerer usually guides the pen, the Angel, noble and gentle, interlines letters of light here and there. Alas! Thackeray, I wish your strong wings would lift you oftener above the smoke of cities into the pure region nearer heaven!

Good-bye for the present.—Yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

### Letter 408

TO G. H. LEWES

I can be on my guard against my enemies, but God deliver me from my friends!

CURRER BELL.

### Letter 409

TO G. H. LEWES

*January 19th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I will tell you why I was so hurt by that review in the *Edinburgh*—not because its criticism was keen or its blame sometimes severe; not because its praise was stinted (for, indeed, I think you give me quite as much praise as I deserve), but because after I had said earnestly that I wished critics would judge me as an *author*, not as a woman, you so roughly—I even thought so cruelly—handled the question of sex. I dare say you meant no harm, and perhaps you will not now be able to understand why I was so grieved at what you will probably deem such a trifle; but grieved I was, and indignant too.

There was a passage or two which you did quite wrong to write.

However, I will not bear malice against you for it; I know what your nature is: it is not a bad or unkind one, though you



would often jar terribly on some feelings with whose recoil and quiver you could not possibly sympathise. I imagine you are both enthusiastic and implacable, as you are at once sagacious and careless; you know much and discover much, but you are in such a hurry to tell it all you never give yourself time to think how your reckless eloquence may affect others; and, what is more, if you knew how it did affect them, you would not much care.

However, I shake hands with you: you have excellent points; you can be generous. I still feel angry, and think I do well to be angry; but it is the anger one experiences for rough play rather than for foul play.—I am yours, with a certain respect, and more chagrin,

CURRER BELL.

### Letter 410

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 19th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—You had a weary long time to wait at Bradford and a most crushing ride home, and then the necessity of entertaining company when you ought to have rested was rather too bad. I am glad to hear Amelia does not fret; I trust her spirit will keep her up through the tedious period of suspense she will probably have to endure. How it will end, God knows. I *think* from the first Joe Taylor has deliberately intended this shall be the finale. I feel sure the visit to Tranby rather confirmed than shook this resolution. I feel angry with myself every day that I have not yet written to Amelia, but in truth I hardly know what to say; however, I shall pluck up courage as soon as possible.

All you tell me about the notoriety of *Shirley* in Dewsbury, etc., is almost as good as an emetic to me. I should really 'go off at side' if I thought too much about it. Mr. Nicholls having finished *Jane Eyre* is now crying out for the 'other book'; he is to have it next week, much good may it do him. I answered Sir J. K. Shuttleworth's note yesterday, thanking and declining as neatly as I knew how.

Since you left I have had no letter from London; I think if Lewes had any thought of answering my missive he would have done it at once, for he generally bolts his replies by return of post.

Dear Nell, it is lonesome without you. Write again soon. Good-bye.

Love to all at Brookroyd.

## Letter 411

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 25th, 1850*

DEAR ELLEN,—Your indisposition was, I have no doubt, in a great measure owing to the change in the weather from frost to thaw. I had one sick-headachy day ; but, for me, only a slight attack. You must be careful of cold. I have just written to Amelia a brief note thanking her for the cuffs, etc. It was a burning shame I did not write sooner. Herewith are enclosed three letters for your perusal, the first from Mary Taylor, which you are to read immediately—so the order runs—and not to send it to Mrs. Burnley. There is also one from Lewes and one from Sir J. K. Shuttleworth, both which peruse and return. I have also, since you went, had a remarkable epistle from Thackeray, long, interesting, characteristic, but it unfortunately concludes with the strict injunction, *show this letter to no one*, adding that if he thought his letters were seen by others, he should either cease to write or write only what was conventional ; but for this circumstance I should have sent it with the others. I answered it at length. Whether my reply will give satisfaction or displeasure remains yet to be ascertained. Thackeray's feelings are not such as can be gauged by ordinary calculation : variable weather is what I should ever expect from that quarter, yet in correspondence as in verbal intercourse, this would torment me.—Yours faithfully,

C. B.

## Letter 412

TO MISS WOOLER.

*HAWORTH, January 28th, 1850.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—Your last kind note would not have remained so long unanswered if I had been in better health. While Ellen was with me, I seemed to revive wonderfully, but began to grow worse again the day she left, and this falling off proved symptomatic of a relapse. My doctor called the next day ; he said the headache from which I was suffering arose from inertness in the liver. . . .

Thank God I now feel better, and very grateful am I for the improvement, grateful no less for my dear father's sake, than for my own.

Most fully can I sympathise with you in the anxiety you

express about Mr. Taylor. The thought of his leaving England and going out alone to a strange country, with all his natural sensitiveness and retiring diffidence, is indeed painful ; still, my dear Miss Wooler, should he actually go to America, I can but then suggest to you the same source of comfort and support you have suggested to me, and of which indeed I know you never lose sight, namely, reliance on Providence. 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' and He will doubtless care for a good, though afflicted man, amidst whatever difficulties he may be thrown. When you write again, I should be glad to know whether your anxiety on this subject is released, and also hear how Mrs. M—— and her family are getting on. I was truly glad to learn through Ellen, that Ilkley still continued to agree with your health. Earnestly trusting that the New Year may prove to you a happy and tranquil time,—I am, my dear Miss Wooler, sincerely and affectionately yours,

C. BRONTË.

Give my kind love to Miss Sarah. Papa says I am always to give his best respects when I write to you.

## Letter 413

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 28th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I cannot but be concerned to hear of your mother's illness ; write again soon, if it be but a line, to tell me how she gets on. This shadow will, I trust and believe, be but a passing one, but it is a foretaste and warning of what *must come* one day. Let it prepare your mind, dear Ellen, for that great trial which, if you live, it *must* in the course of a few years be your lot to undergo. That cutting asunder of the ties of nature is the pain we most dread and which we are most certain to experience. Perhaps you will have seen Joe Taylor ere this. I had a brief note from him, dated Hull : he had seen Mr. Ringrose, whom he found 'inimical though not avowedly so, desirous to refuse but wanting a pretext.' 'Such a reception,' he says, 'would, six weeks ago, have made him give it up.' He does not mention whether he saw Amelia. He will go on. Lewes' letter made me laugh, I cannot respect him more for it. Sir J. K. Shuttleworth's letter did not make me laugh. He has written again since. I have received to-day a note from Miss Alexander, Lupset Cottage, Wakefield, daughter, she says, of Dr. Alexander. Do

you know anything of her? Mary Taylor seems in good health and spirits and in the way of doing well. I shall feel anxious to hear again soon. C. B.

*P.S.*—Mr. Nicholls has finished reading *Shirley*, he is delighted with it. John Brown's wife seriously thought he had gone wrong in the head as she heard him giving vent to roars of laughter as he sat alone, clapping his hands and stamping on the floor. He would read all the scenes about the curates aloud to papa, he triumphed in his own character. What Mr. Grant will say is another thing. No matter.

## Letter 414

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*Thursday, January 30th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I wonder how your poor mother is this morning, and how you are too; I wonder also whether you have yet heard from your brothers, and whether the news of their mother's serious illness has penetrated the crust of worldliness with which their hearts are too completely overgrown, and wakened something like the sensation of natural affection. You must let me have a line as soon as you can to tell me how matters progress.

As to Joe Taylor—I really dare not write what I think of him, or what I feel respecting him. I grow more and more convinced that his state of mind approximates to that which was so appallingly exhibited in poor Branwell during the last few years of his life, and if such be the case, she who marries him will join hands with misery—and, as you say, *hopeless* misery. The note I had from him dated Hull just breathed the spirit which you describe as pervading his conversation with you; it was short, but imbued with selfishness and with a sort of unmanly absence of true value for the woman whose hand he seeks. Should he continue in this frame of mind, he cannot be worthy of Amelia. I could infuse no word of sympathy into my answer—I involuntarily made it sharp and stern. With what I said he cannot be pleased, nor will it encourage him to come here; and indeed the thought of his coming would be a nightmare to me. What power Joe Taylor still possesses to interest and influence is an *unreal* power; I greatly fear it all depends on *skilful acting*.

I had just written so far when I received a letter from him



(J. T.). I enclose it. Is this acting, or what is it? Does he give me the rug to pay off some imaginary debt? I wish him well, but both gifts and loans and letters and visits from that quarter have all now something about them from which one shrinks. All seems done on system—nothing from feeling. Write by return of post if you can, dear Nell. Good-bye. C. B.

## Letter 415

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

February 2nd, 1850.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have despatched to-day a parcel containing *The Caxtons*, Macaulay's *Essays*, Humboldt's *Letters*, and such other of the books as I have read, packed with a picturesque irregularity well calculated to excite the envy and admiration of your skilful functionary in Cornhill. By the bye, he ought to be careful of the few pins stuck in here and there, as he might find them useful at a future day, in case of having more bonnets to pack for the East Indies. Whenever you send me a new supply of books, may I request that you will have the goodness to include one or two of Miss Austen's. I am often asked whether I have read them, and I excite amazement by replying in the negative. I have read none except *Pride and Prejudice*. Miss Martineau mentioned *Persuasion* as the best.

Thank you for your account of the *First Performance*. It was cheering and pleasant to read it, for in your animated description I seemed to realise the scene; your criticism also enables me to form some idea of the play. Lewes is a strange being. I always regret that I did not see him when in London. He seems to me clever, sharp, and coarse; I used to think him sagacious, but I believe now he is no more than shrewd, for I have observed once or twice that he brings forward, as grand discoveries of his own, information he has casually received from others—true sagacity disdains little tricks of this sort. But though Lewes has many smart and some deserving points about him, he has nothing truly great; and nothing truly great, I should think, will he ever produce. Yet he merits just such successes as the one you describe—triumphs public, brief, and noisy. Notoriety suits Lewes. Fame—were it possible that he could achieve her—would be a thing uncongenial to him: he could not wait for the solemn blast of her trumpet, sounding long, and slowly waxing louder.

I always like your way of mentioning Mr. Smith, because my own opinion of him concurs with yours; and it is as pleasant to have a favourable impression of character confirmed, as it is painful to see it dispelled. I am sure he possesses a fine nature, and I trust the selfishness of the world and the hard habits of business, though they may and must modify his disposition, will never quite spoil it.

Can you give me any information respecting Sheridan Knowles? A few lines received from him lately, and a present of his *George Lovell*, induce me to ask the question. Of course I am aware that he is a dramatic writer of eminence, but do you know anything about him as a man?

I believe both *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre* are being a good deal read in the north just now; but I only hear fitful rumours from time to time. I ask nothing, and my life of anchorite seclusion shuts out all bearers of tidings. One or two curiosity-hunters have made their way to Haworth Parsonage, but our rude hills and rugged neighbourhood will, I doubt not, form a sufficient barrier to the frequent repetition of such visits.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 416

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*February 5th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am truly glad to hear of the happy change in your mother's state, I hope nothing will occur to give it a check. The relief when a hope of recovery succeeds to the dread of danger must be sweet indeed. I remember it was what I intensely longed for, but what it was not seen good I should enjoy.

Thank you for the scrap of information respecting Sir J. K. Shuttleworth. Mr. Morgan has finished reading *Jane Eyre*, and writes not in blame, but in the highest strains of eulogy! He says it thoroughly fascinated and enchained him, etc., etc., etc.

Martha came in yesterday, puffing and blowing, and much excited. 'I've heard sich news,' she began. 'What about?' 'Please ma'am, you've been and written two books, the grandest books that ever was seen. My father has heard it at Halifax, and Mr. George Taylor and Mr. Greenwood, and Mr. Merrall at Bradford; and they are going to have a meeting at the Mechanics' Institute, and to settle about ordering them.' 'Hold your tongue,

Martha, and be off.' I fell into a cold sweat. *Jane Eyre* will be read by John Brown, by Mrs. Taylor, and Betty. God help, keep, and deliver me! Good-bye. C. B.

## Letter 417

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*February 4th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I return Amelia's letter. The business is a most unpleasant one to be concerned in; it seems to me *now* altogether unworthy, in its beginning, progress, and probable ending. Amelia is the only pure thing about it; she stands between her coarse father and cold unloving suitor like innocence between a pair of world-hardened knaves. The comparison seems rather hard to be applied to Joseph Taylor, but as I see him now he merits it. If Joseph Taylor has no means of keeping a wife—if he does not possess a sixpence he is sure of, how can he think of marrying a woman from whom he cannot expect she should work to keep herself. Joe Taylor's want of candour, the twice falsified account of matters, tell painfully and deeply against his cause. It shows a glimpse of hidden motives such as I refrain from describing in words. It gives a strangely heartless calculation to the whole proceeding—a cast of which he was conscious, but which, knowing how we should judge it, he carefully and jealously veiled from us. Perhaps he is like the majority of those men who lead a gay life in their youth, and arrive at middle age with feelings blunted and passions exhausted, who have but one aim in marriage, the selfish advancement of their interest. And to think that such men take as wives, as second selves, women young, modest, sincere, pure in heart and life, with feeling all fresh, and emotions all unworn, and bind such virtue and vitality to their own withered existence, such sincerity to their own hollowness, such disinterestedness to their own haggard avarice,—to think this—troubles the soul to its inmost depths. Nature and Justice forbid the banns of such wedlock. I write under excitement.

I am glad your mother continues better. Good-bye.

C. BRONTË.

One good thing can still be said: he was candid to Mr. Ringrose. He explained his circumstances truthfully. The germs of all good are not extirpated.

## Letter 418

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*February 16th, 1850.*

DEAR NELL,—I believe I should have written to you before, but I don't know what heaviness of spirit has beset me of late, made my faculties dull, made rest weariness, and occupation burdensome. Now and then the silence of the house, the solitude of the room has pressed on me with a weight I found it difficult to bear, and recollection has not failed to be as alert, poignant, obtrusive as other feelings were languid. I attribute this state of things partly to the weather. Quicksilver invariably falls low in storms and high winds, and I have ere this been warned of approaching disturbance in the atmosphere by a sense of bodily weakness and deep, heavy mental sadness, such as some would call *presentiment*,—presentiment it is, but not at all supernatural.

The Haworth people have been making great fools of themselves about *Shirley*. They take it in an enthusiastic light. When they got the volumes at the Mechanics' Institute, all the members wanted them. They cast lots for the whole three, and whoever got a volume was only allowed to keep it two days, and was to be fined a shilling per diem for longer detention. It would be mere nonsense and vanity to tell you what they say.

I have had no letters from London for a long time, and am very much ashamed of myself to find, now when that stimulus is withdrawn, how dependent on it I had become. I cannot help feeling something of the excitement of expectation till the post hour comes, and when, day after day, it brings nothing, I get low. This is a stupid, disgraceful, unmeaning state of things. I feel bitterly enraged at my own dependence and folly; but it is so bad for the mind to be quite alone, and to have none with whom to talk over little crosses and disappointments, and laugh them away. If I could write, I dare say I should be better, but I cannot write a line. However (D.V.), I shall contend against the idiocy.

I had a rather foolish letter from Miss Wooler the other day. Some things in it nettled me, especially an unnecessarily earnest assurance that, in spite of all I had done in the writing line, I still retained a place in her esteem. My answer took strong and high ground at once. I said I had been troubled by no doubts on the



subject ; that I neither did her nor myself the injustice to suppose there was anything in what I had written to incur the just forfeiture of esteem. I was aware, I intimated, that some persons thought proper to take exceptions at *Jane Eyre*, and that for their own sakes I was sorry, as I invariably found them individuals in whom the animal largely predominated over the intellectual, persons by nature coarse, by inclination sensual, whatever they might be by education and principle.

A few days since, a little incident happened which curiously touched me. Papa put into my hands a little packet of letters and papers, telling me that they were mamma's, and that I might read them. I did read them, in a frame of mind I cannot describe. The papers were yellow with time, all having been written before I was born ; it was strange now to peruse, for the first time, the records of a mind whence my own sprang ; and most strange, and at once sad and sweet, to find that mind of a truly fine, pure, and elevated order. They were written to papa before they were married. There is a rectitude, a refinement, a constancy, a modesty, a sense, a gentleness about them indescribable. I wish she had lived, and that I had known her.

Yesterday, just after dinner, I heard a loud bustling voice in the kitchen demanding to see Mr. Brontë, somebody was shown into the parlour ; shortly after wine was rung for. 'Who is it, Martha?' I asked. 'Some mak<sup>1</sup> of a tradesman,' said she, 'he's not a gentleman, I'm sure.' The personage stayed about an hour, talking in a loud vulgar key all the time. At tea-time I asked papa who it was. 'Why,' said he, 'no other than the Rev. —, vicar of Bierley!' Papa had invited him to take some refreshment, but the creature had ordered his dinner at the Black Bull, and was quite urgent with papa to go down there and join him, offering by way of inducement a bottle, or if papa liked, 'two or three bottles of the best wine Haworth could afford!' He said he was come with a Mr. C——, I think, from Bradford, just to look at the place, and reckoned to be in raptures with the wild scenery! He warmly pressed papa to come and see him at —, and to bring his daughter with him!!! Does he know anything about the books, do you think? he made no allusion to them. I did not see him, not so much as the tail of his coat. Martha said he looked no more like a parson than she did. Papa described him as rather shabby-looking, but said he was wondrous cordial

<sup>1</sup> Sort.

and friendly. Papa, in his usual fashion, put him through a regular catechism of questions; what his living was worth, etc., etc. In answer to inquiries respecting his age he affirmed himself to be thirty-seven—is not this a lie? He must be more. Papa asked him if he were married. He said no, he had no thoughts of being married, he did not like the trouble of a wife; he described himself as ‘living in style, and keeping a very hospitable house.’

Dear Nell, I have written you a long letter; write me a long one in answer. C. B.

Does your mother continue better? How are you, yourself? Do you get the papers regularly? I have just got a note from Amelia Ringrose enclosing a little ear-cap. I hope she won't trouble herself to make me these small presents often. She writes in good spirits but says nothing about Joe Taylor, indeed she has never named him to me, nor I to her.

## Letter 419

TO MISS WOOLER

*February —, 1850.*

Ellen Nussey it seems told you I spent a fortnight in London last December; they wished me very much to stay a month, alleging that I should in that time be able to secure a complete circle of acquaintance, but I found a fortnight of such excitement quite enough: the whole day was usually spent in sight-seeing, and often the evening was spent in society; it was more than I could bear for a length of time. On one occasion I met a party of my critics—seven of them, some of them had been very bitter foes in print, but they were prodigiously civil face to face; these gentlemen seemed infinitely grander, more pompous, dashing, showy, than the few authors I saw. Mr. Thackeray, for instance, is a man of quiet simple demeanour; he is, however, looked upon with some awe and even distrust. His conversation is very peculiar, too perverse to be pleasant. It was proposed to me to see Charles Dickens, Lady Morgan, Mesdames Trollope, Gore, and some others, but I was aware these introductions would bring a degree of notoriety I was not disposed to encounter; I declined, therefore, with thanks.

Nothing charmed me more during my stay in town than the pictures I saw—one or two private collections of Turner's best

water-colour drawings were indeed a treat: his later oil-paintings are strange things—things that baffle description.

I twice saw Macready act—once in *Macbeth* and once in *Othello*. I astonished a dinner-party by honestly saying I did not like him. It is the fashion to rave about his splendid acting—anything more false and artificial, less genuinely impressive than his whole style I could scarcely have imagined; the fact is, the stage-system altogether is hollow nonsense, they act farces well enough, the actors comprehend their parts and do them justice. They comprehend nothing about tragedy or Shakespeare, and it is a failure. I said so, and by so saying produced a blank silence, a mute consternation. I was, indeed, obliged to dissent on many occasions, and to offend by dissenting. It seems now very much the custom to admire a certain wordy, intricate, obscure style of poetry, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning writes. Some pieces were referred to about which Currer Bell was expected to be very rapturous, and failing in this, he disappointed.

London people strike a provincial as being very much taken up with little matters about which no one out of particular town-circles cares much, they talk too of persons—literary men and women whose names are scarcely heard in the country, and in whom you cannot get up an interest. I think I should scarcely like to live in London, and were I obliged to live there, I should certainly go little into company, especially I should eschew the literary coteries.

You told me, my dear Miss Wooler, to write a long letter. I have obeyed you. Believe me now, yours affectionately and respectfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 420

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March, 1850.

DEAR ELLEN,—I scribble you a line in haste to tell you of my proceedings. Various folks are beginning to come boring to Haworth, on the wise errand of seeing the scenery described in *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*; amongst others, Sir J. K. Shuttleworth and Lady Shuttleworth have persisted in coming; they were here on Friday. The baronet looks in vigorous health, he scarcely appears more than thirty-five, but he says he is forty-four; Lady Shuttleworth is rather handsome and still young. They were both

quite unpretending, etc. When here they again urged me to visit them. Papa took their side at once, would not hear of my refusing; I must go,—this left me without plea or defence. I consented to go for three days, they wanted me to return with them in the carriage, but I pleaded off till to-morrow. I wish it was well over.

If all be well I shall be able to write more about them when I come back. Sir James is very courtly, fine-looking; I wish he may be as sincere as he is polished. He shows his white teeth with too frequent a smile; but I will not prejudge him.—In haste,  
yours faithfully, C. B.

### Letter 421

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*March 16th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I found your letter with several others awaiting me on my return home from a brief stay in Lancashire. The mourning border alarmed me much. I feared that dread visitant, before whose coming every household trembles, had invaded your hearth and taken from you perhaps a child, perhaps something dearer still. The loss you have actually sustained is painful, but so much *less* painful than what I had anticipated, that to read your letter was to be greatly relieved. Still, I know what Mrs. Williams will feel. We can have but one father, but one mother, and when either is gone, we have lost what never can be replaced. Offer her, under this affliction, my sincere sympathy. I can well imagine the cloud these sad tidings would cast over your young cheerful family. Poor little Dick's exclamation and burst of grief are most naïve and natural; he felt the sorrow of a child—a keen, but, happily, a transient pang. Time will, I trust, ere long restore your own and your wife's serenity and your children's cheerfulness.

I mentioned, I think, that we had one or two visitors at Haworth lately; amongst them were Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth and his lady. Before departing they exacted a promise that I would visit them at Gawthorpe Hall, their residence on the borders of East Lancashire. I went reluctantly, for it is always a difficult and painful thing to me to meet the advances of people whose kindness I am in no position to repay. Sir James is a man of polished manners, with clear intellect and highly cultivated



mind. On the whole, I got on very well with him. His health is just now somewhat broken by his severe official labours ; and the quiet drives to old ruins and old halls situate amongst older hills and woods, the dialogues (perhaps I should rather say monologues, for I listened far more than I talked) by the fireside in his antique oak-panelled drawing-room, while they suited him, did not too much oppress and exhaust me. The house, too, is very much to my taste, near three centuries old, grey, stately, and picturesque. On the whole, now that the visit is over, I do not regret having paid it. The worst of it is that there is now some menace hanging over my head of an invitation to go to them in London during the season—this, which would doubtless be a great enjoyment to some people, is a perfect terror to me. I should highly prize the advantages to be gained in an extended range of observation, but I tremble at the thought of the price I must necessarily pay in mental distress and physical wear and tear. But you shall have no more of my confessions—to you they will appear folly.—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 422

TO GEORGE SMITH

*March 16th, 1850.*

I return Mr. H——'s note, after reading it carefully. I tried very hard to understand all he says about art ; but, to speak truth, my efforts were crowned with incomplete success. There is a certain jargon in use amongst critics on this point through which it is physically and morally impossible to me to see daylight. One thing, however, I see plainly enough, and that is Mr. Currer Bell needs improvement, and ought to strive after it ; and this (D.V.) he honestly intends to do—taking his time, however, and following as his guides Nature and Truth. If these lead to what the critics call art, it is all very well ; but if not, that grand desideratum has no chance of being run after or caught. The puzzle is, that while the people of the South object to my delineation of Northern life and manners, the people of Yorkshire and Lancashire approve. They say it is precisely the contrast of rough nature with highly artificial cultivation which forms one of their main characteristics. Such, or something very similar, has been the observation made to me lately, whilst I have been from home, by members of some of the ancient East Lancashire families,

whose mansions lie on the hilly borderland between the two counties. The question arises, whether do the London critics, or the old Northern squires, understand the matter best?

Any promise you require respecting the books shall be willingly given, provided only I am allowed the Jesuit's principle of a mental reservation, giving licence to forget and promise whenever oblivion shall appear expedient. The last two or three numbers of *Pendennis* will not, I dare say, be generally thought sufficiently exciting, yet I like them. Though the story lingers (for me), the interest does not flag. Here and there we feel that the pen has been guided by a tired hand, that the mind of the writer has been somewhat chafed and depressed by his recent illness, or by some other cause; but Thackeray still proves himself greater when he is weary than other writers are when they are fresh. The public, of course, will have no compassion for his fatigue, and make no allowance for the ebb of inspiration; but some true-hearted readers here and there, while grieving that such a man should be obliged to write when he is not in the mood, will wonder that, under such circumstances, he should write so well. The parcel of books will come, I doubt not, at such time as it shall suit the good pleasure of the railway officials to send it on—or rather to yield it up to the repeated and humble solicitations of Haworth carriers—till when I wait in all reasonable patience and resignation, looking with docility to that model of active self-helpfulness *Punch* friendly offers the 'Women of England' in his 'Unprotected Female.'<sup>1</sup>

## Letter 423

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 19th, 1850.

DEAR ELLEN,—I have got home again, and now that the visit is over, I am, as usual, glad I have been: not that I could have endured to prolong it; a few days at once, in an utterly strange place, amongst utterly strange faces, is quite enough for me.

When the train stopped at Burnley, I found Sir James waiting for me. A drive of about three miles brought us to the gates of Gawthorpe, and after passing up a somewhat desolate avenue, there towered the hall, grey, antique, castellated and stately before

<sup>1</sup> In *Punch*, from November 3, 1849, to April 20, 1850, there appeared twenty 'Scenes from the Life of an Unprotected Female,' in dialogue and stage directions.

me. It is 250 years old, and within as without, is a model of old English Architecture. The arms and the strange crest of the Shuttleworths are carved on the oak panelling of each room. They are not a parvenu family but date from the days of Richard III. This part of Lancashire seems rather remarkable for its houses of ancient race. The Townleys, who live near, go back to the Conquest.

The people, however, were of still more interest to me than the house. Lady Shuttleworth is a little woman thirty-two years old, with a pretty, smooth, lively face. Of pretension to aristocratic airs, she may be entirely acquitted; of frankness, good-humour, and activity she has enough; truth obliges me to add, that as it seems to me, grace, dignity, fine feeling were not in the inventory of her qualities. These last are precisely what her husband possesses; in manner he can be gracious and dignified, his tastes and feelings are capable of elevation: frank he is not, but on the contrary, politic; he calls himself a man of the world and knows the world's ways; courtly and affable in some points of view, he is strict and rigorous in others. In him high mental cultivation is combined with an extended range of observation, and thoroughly practical views and habits. His nerves are naturally acutely sensitive, and the present very critical state of his health has exaggerated sensitiveness into irritability. His wife is of a temperament precisely suited to nurse him and wait on him; if her sensations were more delicate and acute she would not do half so well. They get on perfectly together. The children, there are four of them, are all fine children in their way. They have a young German lady as governess, a quiet, well-instructed, interesting girl, whom I took to at once, and, in my heart, liked better than anything else in the house. She also instinctively took to me. She is very well treated for a governess, but wore the usual pale, despondent look of her class. She told me she was homesick, and she looked so.

I have received the parcel containing the cushions and all the etcetera, for which I thank you very much. I suppose I must begin with the group of flowers; I don't know how I shall manage it, but I shall try. I have a good number of letters to answer, from Smith, from Williams, from Thornton Hunt, Lætitia Wheelwright, Harriet Dyson, and that Miss A——, who has written again though I did not answer her first letter (more shame to me), so I must bid you good-bye for the present. Write to me soon.

The brief absence from home, though in some respects trying and painful in itself, has I think given me a little better tone of spirit. All through this month of February, I have had a crushing time of it. I could not escape from or rise above certain most mournful recollections,—the last few days, the sufferings, the remembered words, most sorrowful to me, of those who, Faith assures me, are now happy. At evening and bed-time, such thoughts would haunt me, bringing a weary heartache. Good-bye dear ——.—  
Yours faithfully, C. B.

## Letter 424

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

March 19th, 1850.

MY DEAR SIR,—The books came yesterday evening just as I was wishing for them very much. There is much interest for me in opening the Cornhill parcel. I wish there was not pain too—but so it is. As I untie the cords and take out the volumes, I am reminded of those who once on similar occasions looked on eagerly; I miss familiar voices commenting mirthfully and pleasantly; the room seems very still, very empty; but yet there is consolation in remembering that papa will take pleasure in some of the books. Happiness quite unshared can scarcely be called happiness—it has no taste.

I wonder how you can choose so well; on no account would I forestall the choice. I am sure any selection I might make for myself would be less satisfactory than the selection others so kindly and judiciously make for me; besides, if I knew all that was coming it would be comparatively flat. I would much rather not know.

Amongst the especially welcome works are *Southey's Life*, the *Women of France*, Hazlitt's *Essays*, Emerson's *Representative Men*; but it seems invidious to particularise when all are good. . . . I took up a second small book, Scott's *Suggestions on Female Education*; that, too, I read, and with unalloyed pleasure. It is very good; justly thought, and clearly and felicitously expressed. The girls of this generation have great advantages; it seems to me that they receive much encouragement in the acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of their minds; in these days women may be thoughtful and well read, without being universally stigmatised as 'Blues' and 'Pedants.' Men begin to approve and aid, instead of



ridiculing or checking them in their efforts to be wise. I must say that, for my own part, whenever I have been so happy as to share the conversation of a really intellectual man, my feeling has been, not that the little I knew was accounted a superfluity and impertinence, but that I did not know enough to satisfy just expectation. I have always to explain, 'In me you must not look for great attainments: what seems to you the result of reading and study is chiefly spontaneous and intuitive.' . . . Against the teaching of some (even clever) men, one instinctively revolts. They may possess attainments, they may boast varied knowledge of life and of the world; but if of the finer perceptions, of the more delicate phases of feeling, they may be destitute and incapable, of what avail is the rest? Believe me, while hints well worth consideration may come from unpretending sources, from minds not highly cultured, but naturally fine and delicate, from hearts kindly, feeling, and unenvious, learned dictums delivered with pomp and sound may be perfectly empty, stupid, and contemptible. No man ever yet 'by aid of Greek climbed Parnassus,' or taught others to climb it. . . .

I enclose for your perusal a scrap of paper which came into my hands without the knowledge of the writer. He is a poor working man of this village—a thoughtful, reading, feeling being, whose mind is too keen for his frame, and wears it out. I have not spoken to him above thrice in my life, for he is a Dissenter, and has rarely come in my way. The document is a sort of record of his feelings, after the perusal of *Jane Eyre*; it is artless and earnest, genuine and generous. You must return it to me, for I value it more than testimonies from higher sources. He said: 'Miss Brontë, if she knew he had written it, would scorn him'; but, indeed, Miss Brontë does not scorn him; she only grieves that a mind of which this is the emanation should be kept crushed by the leaden hand of poverty—by the trials of uncertain health and the claims of a large family.

As to the *Times*, as you say, the acrimony of its critique has proved, in some measure, its own antidote; to have been more effective it should have been juster. I think it has had little weight up here in the North: it may be that annoying remarks, if made, are not suffered to reach my ear; but certainly, while I heard little condemnatory of *Shirley*, more than once have I been deeply moved by manifestations of even enthusiastic approbation. I deem it unwise to dwell much on these matters; but for once I

must permit myself to remark, that the generous pride many of the Yorkshire people have taken in the matter has been such as to awake and claim my gratitude, especially since it has afforded a source of reviving pleasure to my father in his old age. The very curates, poor fellows! show no resentment: each characteristically finds solace for his own wounds in crowing over his brethren. Mr. Donne was, at first, a little disturbed; for a week or two he was in disquietude, but he is now soothed down; only yesterday I had the pleasure of making him a comfortable cup of tea, and seeing him sip it with revived complacency. It is a curious fact that, since he read *Shirley*, he has come to the house oftener than ever, and been remarkably meek, and assiduous to please. Some people's natures are veritable enigmas: I quite expected to have had one good scene at least with him; but as yet nothing of the sort has occurred.

I hope Mrs. Williams continues well, and that she is beginning to regain composure after the shock of her recent bereavement. She has indeed sustained a loss for which there is no substitute. But rich as she still is in objects for her best affections, I trust the void will not be long or severely felt. She must think, not of what she has lost, but of what she possesses. With eight fine children, how can she ever be poor or solitary!—Believe me, dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 425

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*March 30th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—You must not wait for me to come to Brookroyd before you go to Tranby. I have no intention of leaving home at present, especially as it may be necessary (though this is quite uncertain) that I should go to London for a week or two in the course of the spring, and if I *do*, I should like to see you after my return, since I should then have more to tell you. I had a letter from Amelia yesterday, very kindly and sensibly written. She speaks of Joe and seems to wish to get from me a distinct opinion of his character, etc. This I cannot give her, for were there no other objection, I have as yet no distinct opinion, though I may have strong impressions for my own use.

I enclose a slip of newspaper for your amusement ; me it both amused and touched, for it alludes to some who are in this world no longer. It is an extract from an American paper, and is written by an emigrant from Haworth. You will find it a curious mixture of truth and inaccuracy. Return it when you write again. I also send you for perusal an opinion of *Jane Eyre* written by a *working man* in this village ; rather, I should say, a record of the feelings the book excited in the poor fellow's mind ; it was not written for my inspection, nor does the writer know that his little document has by intricate means come into my possession, and I have forced those who gave it, to promise they will never inform him of the circumstance. He is a modest, thoughtful, feeling, reading being, to whom I have spoken perhaps about three times in the course of my life ; his delicate health renders him incapable of hard or close labour, and his family are often under the pressure of want. He feared that if 'Miss Brontë saw what he had written she would laugh it to scorn,' but Miss Brontë considers it one of the highest, because one of the most truthful and artless tributes her work has yet received. You must return this likewise. I do you great honour in showing it to you. Give my love to all at Brookroyd, and believe me, yours faithfully,

C. B.

## Letter 426

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 3rd, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I certainly do think that you are generally too venturesome in risking exposure to all weathers—there are sudden changes from hot to cold and *vice versa*—there are fogs, cold penetrating winds during which all people of constitutions not robust are better in the house than out of doors ; regular exercise is an excellent thing, but in very cold or damp and stormy weather, you cannot always with prudence enjoy it. I do not wish you to coddle yourself, but trust you will be careful, . . . maladies are sooner caught than cured. In your position it is your positive duty to run no risks ; if anything happened to you what would be your mother's condition ? Do not write again till you can do it without fatigue, but, as soon as you feel able, indite me a *particular*, detailed account of your state, speak the *exact* truth and give me no deceiving gloss.—Yours,

C. B.

## Letter 427

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*April 3rd, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received the *Dublin Review*, and your letter enclosing the Indian Notices. I hope these reviews will do good ; they are all favourable, and one of them (the *Dublin*) is very able. I have read no critique so discriminating since that in the *Revue des deux Mondes*. It offers a curious contrast to Lewes's in the *Edinburgh*, where forced praise, given by jerks, and obviously without real and cordial liking, and censure, crude, conceited, and ignorant, were mixed in random lumps—forming a very loose and inconsistent whole.

Are you aware whether there are any grounds for that conjecture in the *Bengal Hurkaru*, that the critique in the *Times* was from the pen of Mr. Thackeray? I should much like to know this. If such were the case (and I feel as if it were by no means impossible), the circumstance would open a most curious and novel glimpse of a very peculiar disposition. Do you think it likely to be true?

The account you give of Mrs. Williams's health is not cheering, but I should think her indisposition is partly owing to the variable weather ; at least, if you have had the same keen frost and cold east winds in London, from which we have lately suffered in Yorkshire. I trust the milder temperature we are now enjoying may quickly confirm her convalescence. With kind regards to Mrs. Williams,—Believe me, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 428

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*April 12th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I own I was glad to receive your assurance that the Calcutta paper's surmise was unfounded.<sup>1</sup> It is said that when we *wish* a thing to be true, we are prone to believe it true ; but I think (judging from myself) we adopt with a still prompter credulity the rumour which shocks.

It is very kind in Dr. Forbes to give me his book. I hope Mr. Smith will have the goodness to convey my thanks for the

<sup>1</sup> That Thackeray had written the *Times* review of *Shirley*.



present. You can keep it to send with the next parcel, or perhaps I may be in London myself before May is over. That invitation I mentioned in a previous letter is still urged upon me, and well as I know what penance its acceptance would entail in some points, I also know the advantage it would bring in others. My conscience tells me it would be the act of a moral poltroon to let the fear of suffering stand in the way of improvement. But suffer I shall. No matter.

The perusal of *Southey's Life* has lately afforded me much pleasure. The autobiography with which it commences is deeply interesting, and the letters which follow are scarcely less so, disclosing as they do a character most estimable in its integrity and a nature most amiable in its benevolence, as well as a mind admirable in its talent. Some people assert that genius is inconsistent with domestic happiness, and yet Southey was happy at home and made his home happy; he not only loved his wife and children *though* he was a poet, but he loved them the better *because* he was a poet. He seems to have been without taint of worldliness. London with its pomps and vanities, learned coteries with their dry pedantry, rather scared than attracted him. He found his prime glory in his genius, and his chief felicity in home affections. I like Southey.

I have likewise read one of Miss Austen's works—*Emma*—read it with interest and with just the degree of admiration which Miss Austen herself would have thought sensible and suitable. Anything like warmth or enthusiasm—anything energetic, poignant, heart-felt is utterly out of place in commending these works: all such demonstration the authoress would have met with a well-bred sneer, would have calmly scorned as outré and extravagant. She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well. There is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting. She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood. Even to the feelings such safes no more than an occasional graceful but distant allusion—too frequent converse with them would ruffle the high elegance of her progress. Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, ears, and feet. What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, she leads her to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden,

what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentient target of death—this Miss Austen ignores. She no more, with her mind's eye, beholds the heart of her race than each man, with bodily vision, sees the heart in his heaving breast. Jane Austen was a complete and most sensible lady, but a very incomplete and rather insensible (*not senseless*) woman. If this is heresy, I cannot help it. If I said it to some people (Lewes for instance) they would directly accuse me of advocating exaggerated heroics, but I am not afraid of your falling into any such vulgar error.—Believe me, yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

### Letter 429

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 12th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I cannot find your last letter to refer to and therefore this will be no answer to it—you must write again by return of post if possible, and let me know how you are progressing. What you said in your last confirmed my opinion that your late attack had been coming on for a long time. Your wish for a cold water bath is, I should think, the result of fever; almost every one has complained lately of tendency to low fever. I have felt it in frequent thirst and infrequent appetite. Papa, too, and Martha, have complained. I fear this damp weather will scarcely suit you, but write and say all. Of late I have had many letters to answer—and some very bewildering ones—from people who want opinions about their books, who seek acquaintance and who flatter to get it—people who utterly mistake all about me. They are most difficult to answer, put off, and appease without offending, for such characters are excessively touchy and when affronted turn malignant. Their books are too often deplorable. Sir J. K. Shuttleworth and family are in London. I enclose the last note received from him. You are to read and comment. This was his theme when I was at Gawthorpe. I then gave notice that I would not be lionised; that is why he talks of ‘small parties.’ I know what the effect and what the pain will be; but he who shuns suffering will never win victory. I mean to improve, I must strive and endure. The visit, if I will, however, be *short*, as short as I can possibly make it. V

true;  
empter  
hope  
or the

to God it were well over! I have one safeguard. Sir James has been a physician, and looks at me with a physician's eye: he saw at once that I could not stand much fatigue, nor bear the presence of many strangers. I believe he could partly understand how soon my stock of animal spirits was brought to a low ebb; but none—not the most skilful physician—can get at more than the outside of these things; the heart knows its own bitterness and the frame its own poverty, and the mind its own struggles. Papa is eager and restless for me to go; the idea of a refusal quite hurt him. Once more, would it were well over!—Yours, dear Nell,

C. B.

Amelia still writes to me. I sometimes find it difficult to answer her letters, but am always touched by their amiability. Tom Dixon wrote a note to say they would be here on Saturday week.

## Letter 430

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 13th, 1850.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—It shall be my endeavour to come to you this week; of course I cannot be very easy till I have seen you, but it is quite useless to dilate on any impression your condition makes on me. I most earnestly wish to see you. As to trifling with serious illness, you could have Mr. Teale. God bless and protect you! Sincerely yours,

C. BRONTË.

I think you said the Birstall Omnibus started from the George about 4 o'clock p.m. Do not be discouraged if you happen to feel worse to-day, the weather is terribly unfavourable, an east wind giving everybody cold. I cannot tell whether your complaint in any respects resembles Anne's, but I trust and hope there is in your case this great difference, viz. that no vital organ, such as the lungs, is already by its inherent unsoundness predisposed to malady. I wonder what 'strong medicine' Mr. Carr intends to give you. I abhor and distrust their 'strong medicine.' He is not dealing with a horse or an elephant. In case of any decided change for the better in your state a single line will relieve me from some anxiety. Dear Nell, if prayers will do any good, I shall remember you.

## Letter 431

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

April, 1850,  
Wednesday.

DEAR ELLEN.—I arrived home safely about half-past seven on Monday evening, and I am sorry to say I found papa far from well, with a bad cold; to-day, however, he is much better. I hope, with care, he will soon be much as usual. Joe Taylor came yesterday punctually at 2 o'clock. At first he was in an odious humour, behaving just as you described him that evening at Brookroyd. He had not been in the house 10 minutes before he began abusing 'old Ringrose,' in this strain he ran on—'he would not be kept waiting, it was humbug, he would give it up,' etc. I was beginning to feel much disgusted and to wonder how the time would pass till six o'clock. Papa being in bed, I had my visitor utterly to myself. Soon after dinner he took a turn, began gradually to calm, soften, talk rather affectionately of Miss Ringrose, and less bitterly of her father; to these topics he stuck almost the whole time, waxing more and more amiable towards the close. He had not a word to say that was new, his visit was, as I told you, a caprice. When he left at six, he announced that he should come again soon, and if he does come, he will talk the same things over again. I shall listen, mind my sewing, and be as patient as I possibly can. The visit did not exhaust me, I never once got excited, and talked very little. In talking of Miss Ringrose, his aim and pleasure seemed to be to reason himself into illusion and something like love, he repeated over and over again that she looked 'very nice' last time he saw her, and commended her conduct to the servants and to all round her. He said, in short, what was true and right, but he said it so often I was sometimes at a loss for responses. No need to comment on the affair.

How are you, and what are the results of the tooth extraction? Give my love to all at Brookroyd, tell Mercy that I was much concerned at not bidding her good-bye. Tell Mrs. Clapham that I made the pigeons into a pie and that they were excellent. Papa found them quite a treat and he had no appetite for meat. I send the *Examiner* and *Courier*.—Yours faithfully, C. B.



## Letter 432

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*April 25th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR, - I cannot let the post go without thanking Mr. Smith through you for the kind reply to Greenwood's application;<sup>1</sup> and, I am sure, both you and he would feel true pleasure could you see the delight and hope with which these liberal terms have inspired a good and intelligent though poor man. He thinks he now sees a prospect of getting his livelihood by a method which will suit him better than wool-combing work has hitherto done, exercising more of his faculties and sparing his health. He will do his best, I am sure, to extend the sale of the cheap edition of *Jane Eyre*; and whatever twinges I may still feel at the thought of that work being in the possession of all the worthy folk of Haworth and Keighley, such scruples are more than counterbalanced by the attendant good;—I mean, by the assistance it will give a man who deserves assistance. I wish he could permanently establish a little bookselling business in Haworth: it would benefit the place as well as himself.

Thank you for the *Leader*, which I read with pleasure. The notice of Newman's work in a late number was very good.—Believe me, my dear sir, in haste yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 433

TO CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND,

*April 29th 1850.*

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—I have set up shop! I am delighted with it as a whole—that is, it is as pleasant or as little disagreeable as you can expect an employment to be that you earn your living by. The best of it is that your labour has some return, and you are not forced to work on hopelessly without result. *Du reste*, it is very odd. I keep looking at myself with one eye

<sup>1</sup> That he should be assisted in adding bookselling to the little stationery store which helped him to a livelihood. The inscription on his tomb in Haworth churchyard runs: —'In loving memory of John Greenwood of Haworth, who died March 25, 1863, aged 56 years.' He gave Mrs. Gaskell a brief reminiscence of the Brontë children buying writing-paper from him. See *Life*, Haworth edition, page 294.

while I'm using the other, and I sometimes find myself in very queer positions. Yesterday I went along the shore past the wharfs and several warehouses on a street where I had never been before during all the five years I have been in Wellington. I opened the door of a long place filled with packages, with passages up the middle, and a row of high windows on one side. At the far end of the room a man was writing at a desk beneath a window. I walked all the length of the room very slowly, for what I had come for had completely gone out of my head. Fortunately the man never heard me until I had recollected it. Then he got up, and I asked him for some stone-blue, saltpetre, tea, pickles, salt, etc. He was very civil. I bought some things and asked for a note of them. He went to his desk again; I looked at some newspapers lying near. On the top was a circular from Smith & Elder containing notices of the most important new works. The first and longest was given to *Shirley*, a book I had seen mentioned in the *Manchester Examiner* as written by Currer Bell. I blushed all over. The man got up, folding the note. I pulled it out of his hand and set off to the door, looking odder than ever, for a partner had come in and was watching. The clerk said something about sending them, and I said something too—I hope it was not very silly—and took my departure.

I have seen some extracts from *Shirley* in which you talk of women working. And this first duty, this great necessity, you seem to think that some women may indulge in, if they give up marriage, and don't make themselves too disagreeable to the other sex. You are a coward and a traitor. A woman who works is by that alone better than one who does not; and a woman who does not happen to be rich and who *still* earns no money and does not wish to do so, is guilty of a great fault, almost a crime—a dereliction of duty which leads rapidly and almost certainly to all manner of degradation. It is very wrong of you to *plead* for toleration for workers on the ground of their being in peculiar circumstances, and few in number or singular in disposition. Work or degradation is the lot of all except the very small number born to wealth.

For the last month I have really had a good excuse for not writing any more book. I have worked hard at something else. We have been moving, cleaning, shop-keeping, until I was really tired every night—a wonder for me. It does me good, and I had much rather be tired than *ennuyée*. Have you seen Joe? or heard

anything of John? There is a change gradually come over them in the last five years that I am only half acquainted with. Joe's gloom and John's wandering both show wretched health, and Joe's cure seems to me very fantastic. By the eagerness with which he seeks to be married he evidently hopes more from the change than it will bring. It is certainly better to be married, but to look forward to such great things is just insuring disappointment. Their business gives no subject for such depression, and, perhaps, if they were poorer they would have more to care for. We all here thrive wonderfully, Waring and his babies, Ellen and myself. Ellen is worst—that is, least well. She was seriously ill on the passage out. Henry is in Sydney. I think he will learn Waring's trade and settle in Auckland. John and Joe have promised to help him.

Ellen is with me, or I with her. I cannot tell how our shop will turn out, but I am as sanguine as ever. Meantime we certainly amuse ourselves better than if we had nothing to do. We *like* it, and that's the truth. By the *Cornelia* we are going to send home sketches and fern leaves. You must look at them, and it will need all your eyes to understand them, for they are a mass of confusion. They are all within two miles of Wellington, and some of them rather like—Ellen's sketch of me especially. During the last six months I have seen more 'society' than in all the last four years. Ellen is half the reason of my being invited, and my improved circumstances besides. There is no one worth mentioning particularly. The women are all ignorant and narrow, and the men selfish. They are of a decent, honest kind, and some intelligent and able. A Mr. Woodward is the only *literary* man we know, and he seems to have fair sense. This was the clerk I bought the stone-blue of. We have just got a mechanics' institute, and weekly lectures delivered there. It is amusing to see people trying to find out whether or not it is fashionable and proper to patronise it. Somehow it seems it is. I think I have told you all this before, which shows I have got to the end of my news. Your next letter to me ought to bring me good news, more cheerful than the last. You will somehow get drawn out of your hole and find interests among your fellow-creatures. Do you know that living among people with whom you have not the slightest interest in common is just like living alone, or worse? Ellen Nussey is the only one you can talk to, that I know of at least. Give my love to her and to Miss Wooler, if you have the

opportunity. I am writing this on just such a night as you will likely read it—rain and storm, coming winter, and a glowing fire. Ours is on the ground, wood, no fender or irons; no matter, we are very comfortable.

PAG.

## Letter 434

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 29th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I return Miss Wooler's little note, which it gave me melancholy pleasure to read; it is as you say very like her, thoroughly characteristic, both of some of her faults and much of her excellence. By this time I suppose you are at Bradford. Has the change of air done you any good?

We have had but a poor week of it at Haworth. Papa continues far from well; he is often very sickly in the morning, a symptom which I have remarked before in his aggravated attacks of bronchitis; unless he should get much better, I shall never think of leaving him to go to London. Martha has suffered from *tic-douloureux*, with sickness and fever, just like you. She is, however, much better at present. I have a bad cold, and stubborn sore throat; in short, everybody but old Tabby is out of sorts. When Joe Taylor was here, he complained of sudden headache, and the night after he was gone I had something similar, very bad, lasting about three hours.

I have just got another letter from Amelia; she is a good, kind girl, but when she is married she must take care to be more sparing of her love to her spouse than she is of epistles to her friends.

The wind is in the east, I fear it will not suit you. Send me a bulletin quickly.—Yours truly,

C. B.

## Letter 435

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*May 6th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received the copy of *Jane Eyre*.<sup>1</sup> To me the printing and paper seem very tolerable. Will not the public in general be of the same opinion? And are you not making yourselves causelessly uneasy on the subject?

<sup>1</sup> The cheap one-volume reprint.



I imagine few will discover the defects of typography unless they are pointed out. There are, no doubt, technical faults and perfections in the art of printing to which printers and publishers ascribe a greater importance than the majority of readers.

I will mention Mr. Smith's proposal respecting the cheap publications to Greenwood. I believe him to be a man on whom encouragement is not likely to be thrown away, and who, if fortune should not prove quite adverse, will contrive to effect something by dint of intelligence and perseverance.

I am sorry to say my father has been far from well lately—the cold weather has tried him severely; and, till I see him better, my intended journey to town must be deferred. With sincere regards to yourself and other Cornhill friends,—I am, my dear sir, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 436

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 11th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I trust papa is now really better, but he has been very unwell since I wrote last—without appetite, feeble, and sickly. I felt for some days great anxiety about him, it is impossible to disguise from myself that these repeated attacks of bronchitis are a serious matter. There is something that appears very strange, that shocks, in the rapid advance of Miss Walker's illness. Consumption seems to be more rapid as well as more general in its ravages than formerly.

The Miss Wooler and M—— business is characteristic of each. I can well conceive the annoyance ——'s vagaries must cause. I fear I should be almost driven beside myself; certainly few things are more annoying than the wilfulness of a weak person, So long as they are tractable their deficiencies can be borne with. but when they reject counsel and blunder into difficulties of their own making, one does not know how to manage. Last Friday was the day appointed for me to go to Lancashire, but I did not think papa well enough to be left, and accordingly begged Sir James and Lady Shuttleworth to return to London without me. It was arranged that we were to stay at several of their friends' and relatives' houses on the way; a week or more would have been taken up in the journey. I cannot say that I regret having missed this ordeal; I would as lief have walked among red-hot

ploughshares ; but I do regret one great treat, which I shall now miss. Next Wednesday is the anniversary dinner of the Royal Literary Fund Society, held in Freemasons' Hall. Octavian Blewitt, the secretary, offered me a ticket for the Ladies' Gallery. I should have seen all the great literati and artists gathered in the hall below, and heard them speak. Thackeray and Dickens are always present among the rest. This cannot now be. I don't think all London can afford another sight to me so interesting.<sup>1</sup>

With regards to all at Brookroyd,—I am, dear Nell, yours faithfully,  
C. B.

### Letter 437

TO W. S. WILLIAMS<sup>2</sup>

*May 20th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I am thankful to say that papa is now so much better—so nearly indeed restored to his usual state of health, that I trust to be at liberty to come to town next Thursday. I look forward to the visit with mixed feelings, desiring it on some accounts, dreading it on others.

Illness has of late been, and still is, very general here ; from what you say such seems also to have been the case in the South ; I am glad, however, to learn that the invalids in your own family are convalescent.

Probably you can give me no information respecting the writer of the letter forwarded by you. There was something about it which took it out of the usual category of the letters I receive—genuine, earnest, unaffected ; it deserved an answer, and should have had one, had the address been given.—Hoping to see you soon, I am, dear sir, yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

### Letter 438

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 21st, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—My visit is again postponed. Sir James, I am sorry to say, is most seriously ill, two physicians are in attend-

<sup>1</sup> As an illustration of the change of standpoint in half a century, it may be mentioned that many literary women now denounce this privilege as a degradation of their sex. The Royal Literary Fund preserved the custom up to within the last two or three years, but invited women to partake of the banquet on the occasion when Mr. J. M. Barrie took the Chair in 1905.

<sup>2</sup> This letter was lent me by the owner, Miss Winifred Wrench.

ance twice a day, and company and conversation, even with his own relatives, are prohibited as too exciting. Notwithstanding this, he has written two notes to me himself, claiming a promise that I will wait till he is better, and not allow any one else 'to introduce me,' as he says, 'into the Oceanic life of London.' Sincerely sorry as I was for him, I could not help smiling at this sentence. But I shall willingly promise. I know something of him, and like part at least of what I do know. I do not feel in the least tempted to change him for another. His sufferings are very great; I trust and hope God will be pleased to spare his mind. I have just got a note informing me that he is something better; but, of course, he will vary. Lady Shuttleworth is much, much to be pitied too; his nights, it seems, are most distressing.

Poor Mrs. Gorham and Mary! The cloud which has come over them seems to linger. Good-bye, dear Nell. Write soon to  
C. B.

### Letter 439

TO JAMES TAYLOR

May 22nd, 1850.

MY DEAR SIR,—I had thought to bring the *Leader* and the *Athenæum* myself this time, and not to have to send them by post, but it turns out otherwise; my journey to London is again postponed, and this time indefinitely. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth's state of health is the cause—a cause, I fear, not likely to be soon removed. . . . Once more, then, I settle myself down in the quietude of Haworth Parsonage, with books for my household companions and an occasional letter for a visitor; a mute society, but neither quarrelsome, nor vulgarising, nor unimproving.

One of the pleasures I had promised myself consisted in asking you several questions about the *Leader*, which is really, in its way, an interesting paper. I wanted, amongst other things, to ask you the real names of some of the contributors, and also what Lewes writes besides his 'Apprenticeship of Life.' I always think the article headed 'Literature' is his. Some of the communications in the 'Open Council' department are odd productions; but it seems to me very fair and right to admit them. Is not the system of the paper altogether a novel one? I do not remember seeing anything precisely like it before.

I have just received yours of this morning; thank you for the

enclosed note. The longings for liberty and leisure, which May sunshine wakens in you, stir my sympathy. I am afraid Cornhill is little better than a prison for its inmates on warm spring or summer days. It is a pity to think of you all toiling at your desks in such genial weather as this. For my part, I am free to walk on the moors; but when I go out there alone everything reminds me of the times when others were with me, and then the moors seem a wilderness, featureless, solitary, saddening. My sister Emily had a particular love for them, and there is not a knoll of heather, not a branch of fern, not a young bilberry leaf, not a fluttering lark or linnet, but reminds me of her. The distant prospects were Anne's delight, and when I look round she is in the blue tints, the pale mists, the waves and shadows of the horizon. In the hill-country silence their poetry comes by lines and stanzas into my mind: once I loved it; now I dare not read it, and am driven often to wish I could taste one draught of oblivion, and forget much that, while mind remains, I never shall forget. Many people seem to recall their departed relatives with a sort of melancholy complacency, but I think these have not watched them through lingering sickness, nor witnessed their last moments: it is these reminiscences that stand by your bedside at night, and rise at your pillow in the morning. At the end of all, however, exists the Great Hope. Eternal Life is theirs now.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 440

TO A YOUNG MAN<sup>1</sup>

*May 23rd, 1850.*

DEAR SIR,—Apologies are indeed unnecessary for a 'reality of feeling, for a genuine, unaffected impulse of the spirit,' such as prompted you to write the letter which I now briefly acknowledge.

Certainly it is 'something to me' that what I write should be acceptable to the feeling heart and refined intellect; undoubtedly it is much to me that my creations (such as they are) should find harbourage, appreciation, indulgence at any friendly hand, or from any generous mind. You are very welcome to take Jane, Caroline, and Shirley for your sisters, and I trust they will often speak to their adopted brother when he is solitary, and soothe him when he

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*, and there described as to a young man at Cambridge who had expressed admiration for her books.



is sad. If they cannot make themselves at home in a thoughtful, sympathetic mind, and diffuse through its twilight a cheering domestic glow, it is their fault; they are not, in that case, so amiable, so benignant, not so *real* as they ought to be. If they *can*, and can find household altars in human hearts, they will fulfil the best design of their creation in therein maintaining a genial flame, which shall warm but not scorch, light but not dazzle.

What does it matter that part of your pleasure in such beings has its source in the poetry of your own youth rather than any magic of theirs? What that perhaps, ten years hence, you may smile to remember your present recollections, and view under another light both 'Currer Bell' and his writings? To me this consideration does not detract from the value of what you now feel. Youth has its romance, and maturity its wisdom, as morning and spring have their freshness, noon and summer their power, night and winter their repose. Each attribute is good in its own season. Your letter gave me pleasure, and I thank you for it.

CURRER BELL.

## Letter 441

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 26th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Papa has continued to improve since I last wrote; he preached twice yesterday, and as he is extremely anxious I should get over my London visit, I intend if all be well to go at the close of this week.

I return the Pen and Ink portrait. I cannot say it encourages me to have my own taken. In three things it happens to hit the truth: in making you fond of giving, disposed rather to spend than save, and in representing you as conscientious and affectionate. Most of the other points offer so complete and violent an opposition to the truth as to prove the whole thing quackery.

As this is Whit-Monday I am busy. Good-bye, dear Nell.—  
Yours faithfully,

C. B.

## CHAPTER XXIII

## LONDON AND EDINBURGH

CHARLOTTE BRONTË may be counted among those who have felt the glamour of London. Her praise of it is well known to all who collect the verdict of distinguished writers on that great city. Her visits to it were many, but it was the fifth visit in the summer of 1850 that probably secured to her the greatest personal pleasure. She spent the opening of her fortnight's visit with Mrs. Smith, now removed to Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park, and she closed it with her friend Lætitia Wheelwright at Phillimore Gardens. It was on this occasion that she first saw her hero, the Duke of Wellington; she had a conversation with Thackeray, whom she appears to have 'lectured'; and she met George Henry Lewes, with whom she had corresponded with so much vigour.

## Letter 442

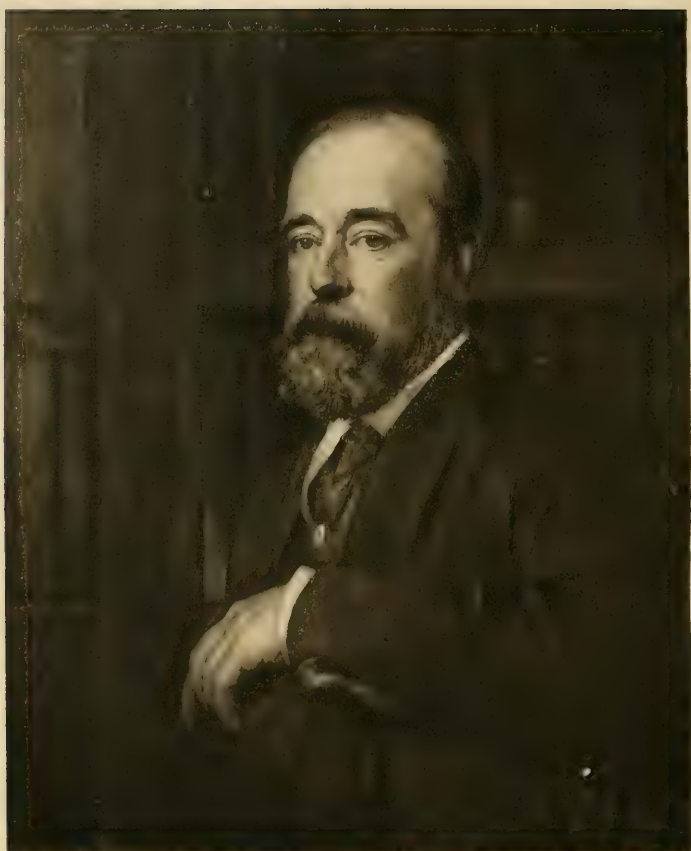
TO ELLEN NUSSEY

76 GLOUCESTER TERRACE, HYDE PARK GARDENS,  
LONDON, *June 3rd*, 1850.

DEAR ELLEN,—I came to London last Thursday. I am staying at Mrs. Smith's, who has changed her residence as the address will show. A good deal of writing backwards and forwards, persuasion, etc., took place before this step was resolved on, but at last I explained to Sir James<sup>1</sup> that I had some little matters

Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth (1804-1877). A doctor of medicine, who was made a baronet in 1849, on resigning the secretaryship of the Committee of Council on Education; assumed the name of Shuttleworth on his marriage, in 1842, to Janet, the only child and heiress of Robert Shuttleworth of Gawthorpe Hall, Burnley (died 1872). His son became Baron Shuttleworth in 1902.





*Mr. George Smith  
from the portrait by G. J. Watts, R. A.*



of business to transact, and that I should stay quietly at my publishers. He has called twice, and Lady Shuttleworth once; each of them alone. He is in a fearfully nervous state. To my great horror he talks of my going with them to Hampton Court, Windsor, etc. God knows how I shall get on. I perfectly dread it.

Here I feel very comfortable, Mrs. Smith treats me with a serene equable kindness which just suits me. Her son is as before genial and kindly. I have seen very few persons, and am not likely to see many, as the agreement was that I was to be very quiet. We have been to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, to the Opera, and the Zoological Gardens. The weather is splendid. I shall not stay longer than a fortnight in London. The feverishness and exhaustion beset me somewhat, but not quite so badly as before, as indeed I have not yet been so much tried. I hope you will write soon and tell me how you are getting on. Give my regards to all.—Yours faithfully,

C. B.

## Letter 443

TO LÆTITIA WHEELWRIGHT

76 GLOUCESTER TERRACE,  
HYDE PARK GARDENS, *June 3rd, '50.*

DEAR LÆTITIA,—I came to London last Thursday and shall stay perhaps a fortnight. To-morrow I expect to go out of town for a few days—but next week, if all be well, I hope to have the pleasure of calling on you. If you write to me meanwhile, address as above, and I shall find the letter on my return.

Give my sincere regards to your papa, mamma, and all round the circle—Emily, Fanny, Sarah-Anne, and, last not least—take a good share of them to your regal self.—I am, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 444

TO REV. P. BRONTË

76 GLOUCESTER TERRACE,  
HYDE PARK GARDENS, *June 4th, 1850.*

DEAR PAPA,—I was very glad to get your letter this morning, and still more glad to learn that your health continues in some

degree to improve. I fear you will feel the present weather somewhat debilitating, at least if it is as warm in Yorkshire as in London. I cannot help grudging these fine days on account of the roofing of the house. It is a great pity the workmen were not prepared to begin a week ago.

Since I wrote I have been to the Opera; to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, where there were some fine paintings, especially a large one by Landseer of the Duke of Wellington on the field of Waterloo, and a grand, wonderful picture of Martin's from Campbell's poem of the 'Last Man,' showing the red sun fading out of the sky, and all the soil of the foreground made up of bones and skulls. The secretary of the Zoological Society also sent me an honorary ticket of admission to their gardens, which I wish you could see. There are animals from all parts of the world enclosed in great cages in the open air amongst trees and shrubs—lions, tigers, leopards, elephants, numberless monkeys, camels, five or six camelopards, a young hippopotamus with an Egyptian for its keeper; birds of all kind—eagles, ostriches, a pair of great condors from the Andes, strange ducks and water-fowl which seem very happy and comfortable, and build their nests among the reeds and edges of the lakes where they are kept. Some of the American birds make inexpressible noises.

There are also all sorts of living snakes and lizards in cages, some great Ceylon toads not much smaller than Flossy, some large foreign rats nearly as large and fierce as little bull-dogs. The most ferocious and deadly-looking things in the place were these rats, a laughing hyena (which every now and then uttered a hideous peal of laughter such as a score of maniacs might produce) and a cobra di capello snake. I think this snake was the worst of all: it had the eyes and face of a fiend, and darted out its barbed tongue sharply and incessantly.

I am glad to hear that Tabby and Martha are pretty well. Remember me to them, and—Believe me, dear papa, your affectionate daughter,  
C. BRONTË.

I hope you don't care for the notice in *Sharpe's Magazine*; it does not disturb me in the least. Mr. Smith says it is of no consequence whatever in a literary sense. Sharpe, the proprietor, was an apprentice of Mr. Smith's father.

## Letter 445

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

[LONDON], *June 12th*, 1850.

DEAR ELLEN,—Since I wrote to you last I have not had many moments to myself, except such as it was *absolutely* necessary to give to rest. On the whole, however, I have thus far got on very well, suffering much less from exhaustion than I did last time.

Of course I cannot in a letter give you a regular chronicle of how my time has been spent. I can only just notify what I deem three of the chief incidents. A sight of the Duke of Wellington at the Chapel Royal (he is a real grand old man), a visit to the House of Commons (which I hope to describe to you some day when I see you), and last, not least, an interview with Mr. Thackeray. He made a morning call, and sat about two hours. Mr. Smith only was in the room the whole time. He described it afterwards as a 'queer scene,' and I suppose it was. The giant sat before me; I was moved to speak to him of some of his shortcomings (literary, of course); one by one the faults came into my mind, and one by one I brought them out, and sought some explanation or defence. He did defend himself, like a great Turk and heathen; that is to say, the excuses were often worse than the crime itself. The matter ended in decent amity; it all be well I am to dine at his house this evening.

I have seen Lewes, too. He is a man with both weakness and sins, but unless I err greatly the foundation of his nature is not bad; and were he almost a fiend in character I could not feel otherwise to him than half-sadly, half-tenderly,—a queer word that last, but I use it because the aspect of Lewes's face almost moves me to tears; it is so wonderfully like Emily, her eyes, her features, the very nose, the somewhat prominent mouth, the forehead, even, at moments, the expression: whatever Lewes does or says, I believe I cannot hate him. Another likeness I have seen, too, that touched me sorrowfully. You remember my speaking of a Miss Kavanagh, a young authoress, who supported her mother by her writings. Hearing from Mr. Williams that she had a longing to see me, I called on her yesterday. I found a little almost dwarfish figure to which even I had to look down, not deformed, that is, not hunchbacked, but long-armed and

with a large head, and (at first sight) a strange face. She met me half-frankly, half-tremblingly; we sat down together, and when I had talked with her five minutes, her face was no longer strange, but mournfully familiar;—it was Martha Taylor on every lineament. I shall try to find a moment to see her again. She lives in a poor but clean and neat little lodging—her mother seems a somewhat weak-minded woman, who can be no companion to her. Her father has quite deserted his wife and child, and this poor little, feeble, intelligent, cordial thing wastes her brains to gain a living. She is twenty-five years old. I do not intend to stay here, at the furthest, more than a week longer; but at the end of that time I cannot go home, for the house at Haworth is just now unroofed, repairs were become necessary.

I should like to go for a week or two to the seaside, in which case I wonder whether it would be possible for you to join me. Meantime, with regards to all, believe me, yours faithfully,

C. B.

## Letter 446

TO MARTHA BROWN

LONDON, *June 15th*, 1850.

DEAR MARTHA,—I have not forgotten my promise of writing to you, though a multitude and variety of engagements have hitherto prevented me from fulfilling it.

It appears, from a letter I received from papa this morning, that you are now in the bustle of unroofing; and I look with much anxiety on a somewhat cloudy sky, hoping and trusting that it will not rain till all is covered in.

You and Martha Redman are to take care not to break your backs with attempting to lift and carry heavy weights; also you are not foolishly to run into draughts, go out without caps or bonnets, or otherwise take measures to make yourselves ill. I am rather curious to know how you have managed about a sleeping-place for yourself and Tabby.

You must not expect that I should give you any particular description of London, as that would take up a good deal of time, and I have only a few minutes to spare. I shall merely say that it is a Babylon of a place, and just now particularly gay and noisy, as this is what is called the height of the London season, and all the fine people are in town. I saw a good many lords and ladies



at the Opera a few nights since, and, except for their elegant dresses, do not think them either much better or much worse than other people.

In answer to this you may, when you have time, write me a few lines, in which you may say how papa is, how you and Tabby are, how the house is getting on, and how Mr. Nicholls prospers.

With kind regards to Tabby, and Martha Redman, I am, dear Martha, your sincere friend,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 447

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

76 GLOUCESTER TERRACE,  
HYDE PARK GARDENS, *June 21st*, 1850.

DEAR ELLEN,—I am leaving London, if all be well, on Tuesday, and shall be very glad to come to you for a few days, if that arrangement still remains convenient to you. I intend to start at 9 o'clock A.M. by the express train which arrives in Leeds 35 m. past two. I should then be at Batley about 4 in the afternoon. Would that suit? My London visit has much surpassed my expectations this time; I have suffered less and enjoyed more than before; rather a trying termination yet remains to me. Mrs. Smith's youngest son is at school in Scotland, and George, her eldest, is going to fetch him home for the vacation; the other evening he announced his intention of taking one of his sisters with him, and proposed that Miss Brontë should go down to Edinburgh and join them there, and see that city and its suburbs. I concluded he was joking, laughed and declined: however, it seems he was in earnest. The thing appearing to me perfectly out of the question, I still refused. Mrs. Smith did not favour it; you may easily fancy how she helped me to sustain my opposition, but her worthy son only waxed more determined. His mother is master of the house, but he is master of his mother. This morning she came and entreated me to go. 'George wished it so much'; he had begged her to use her influence, etc., etc. Now I believe that George and I understand each other very well, and respect each other very sincerely. We both know the wide breach time has made between us; we do not embarrass each other, or very rarely, my six or eight years of seniority, to say nothing of lack of all pretension to beauty, etc., are a perfect safeguard. I should not in the least fear to go with

him to China. I like to see him pleased, I greatly *dislike* to ruffle and disappoint him, so he shall have his mind, and, if all be well, I mean to join him in Edinburgh after I shall have spent a few days with you. With his buoyant animal spirits and youthful vigour he will make severe demands on my muscles and nerves, but I dare say I shall get through somehow, and then perhaps come back to rest a few days with you before I go home. With kind regards to all at Brookroyd, your guests included,—I am, dear Ellen, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Write by return of post.

### Letter 448

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*July 5th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—We shall leave Edinburgh to-morrow morning at a quarter to ten, arrive in York at 40 m. past three. From York I think there is no train to Leeds till about 6.30. If so, I shall not reach Leeds till 8 o'clock; too late for the train to Batley. If it is really too late I shall take a cab at Leeds, for I would rather do that than stay at an Inn all night. I got to Edinburgh very safely; it is a glorious city. I wish you were with us and could see all we saw yesterday. London seems a dreary place compared to it. Mr. Smith was a little bit angry at first about my not having come. Unless plans are again changed we shall travel all together as far as York. We are just going out, so good-bye, dear Nell. Kind regards to all.—Yours faithfully,

C. B.

### Letter 449

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*HAWORTH, July 15th, 1850.*

DEAR NELL,—I got home very well, and full glad was I that no insuperable obstacle had deferred my return a single day longer. Just at the foot of Bridgehouse hill, I met John Greenwood, staff in hand; he fortunately saw me in the cab, stopped, and informed me he was setting off to Brookroyd, by Mr. Brontë's orders, to see how I was, for that he had been quite miserable ever since he got Miss Nussey's letter. I found, on my arrival, that papa had

worked himself up to a sad pitch of nervous excitement and alarm, in which Martha and Tabby were but too obviously joining him. I cannot deny but I was annoyed ; there really being small cause for it all. I hope you got to Hull well. The house looks very clean, and, I think, is not damp ; there is, however, still a great deal to do in the way of settling and arranging, enough to keep me disagreeably busy for some time to come. I was truly thankful to find papa pretty well, but I fear he is just beginning to show symptoms of a cold : my cold continues better. I have recently found that papa's great discomposure had its origin in two sources—the vague fear of my being somehow about to be married to somebody, having received some overtures as he expressed himself—as well as an apprehension of illness. I have distinctly cleared away the first cause of uneasiness. An article in a newspaper, I found awaiting me on my arrival, amused me ; it was a paper published while I was in London. I enclose it to give you a laugh ; it professes to be written by an Author jealous of Authoresses. I do not know who he is, but he must be one of those I met. I saw Geraldine Jewsbury and Mrs. Crowe. The 'ugly men,' giving themselves 'Rochester airs,' is no bad hit ; some of those alluded to will not like it. Love to Amelia, and repeat to her my thanks for her kind invitation and my regret that I could not accept it.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 450

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *July 15th*, 1850.

I would not write to you immediately on my arrival at home, because each return to this old house brings with it a phase of feeling which it is better to pass through quietly before beginning to indite letters. The six weeks of change and enjoyment are past, but they are not lost ; memory took a sketch of each as it went by, and, especially, a distinct daguerreotype of the two days I spent in Scotland. Those were two very pleasant days. I always liked Scotland as an idea, but now, as a reality, I like it far better ; it furnished me with some hours as happy almost as any I ever spent. Do not fear, however, that I am going to bore you with description : you will, before now, have received a pithy and pleasant report of all things, to which any addition of mine

would be superfluous. My present endeavours are directed towards recalling my thoughts, cropping their wings, drilling them into correct discipline, and forcing them to settle to some useful work: they are idle, and keep taking the train down to London, or making a foray over the Border—especially are they prone to perpetrate that last excursion; and who, indeed, that has once seen Edinburgh, with its couchant crag-lion, but must see it again in dreams, waking or sleeping? My dear sir, do not think I blaspheme when I tell you that your great London, as compared to Dun-Edin, ‘mine own romantic town,’ is as prose compared to poetry, or as a great rumbling, rambling, heavy epic compared to a lyric, brief, bright, clear, and vital as a flash of lightning. You have nothing like Scott’s monument, or if you had that, and all the glories of architecture assembled together, you have nothing like Arthur’s Seat, and above all you have not the Scotch national character; and it is that grand character after all which gives the land its true charm, its true greatness.

It was during this visit to London that Charlotte Brontë sat for her portrait to Richmond. It is the only portrait extant of her with any degree of accuracy or any certainty of pedigree. This crayon drawing was the gift of Mr. George Smith to her father. It hung during her lifetime in the parlour at Haworth, but after her death was taken by her husband, Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls, to his ancestral home at Banagher, Ireland. It was twice brought to London for short periods during the next fifty years, bequeathed to the National Portrait Gallery in his will by Mr. Nicholls, and found a permanent home there in the year 1907.

### Letter 451

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*July 18th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—You must cheer up, for your letter proves to me that you are low spirited. As for me, what I said is to be taken in this sense—that, under the circumstances, it would be presumption in me to calculate on a *long* life; a truth obvious enough.



For the rest, we are all in the hands of Him who apportions His gifts—health or sickness, length or brevity of days as is best for the receiver; to him, who has work to do, time will be given in which to do it; for him to whom no task is assigned the season of rest will come earlier: as to the suffering preceding our last sleep—the sickness, decay, the struggle of spirit and flesh, it *must* come sooner or later to all. If, in one point of view, it is sad to have few ties in this world, in another point of view it is soothing; women who have husbands and children must look forwards to death with more pain, more fear, than those who have none. To dismiss the subject, I wish (without cant, and not in any hackneyed sense) that you and I could always say in this matter—the will of God be done.

I am beginning to get settled at home, but the solitude seems heavy as yet, it is a great change, but in looking forward I try to hope for the best. So little faith have I in the power of any temporary excitement to do real good, that I have put off day by day writing to London to tell them I am come home—and till then it was agreed that I should not hear from them. It is painful to be dependent on the small stimulus letters give. I sometimes think I will renounce it altogether, close all correspondence on some quiet pretext, and cease to look forward at post time for any letters but yours.

I send the French newspaper to-day. The *Examiner* went yesterday. Give my love to Amelia, and believe me, yours faithfully,  
C. B.

## Letter 452

TO LÆTITIA WHEELWRIGHT

HAWORTH, *July 30th*, 1850.

MY DEAR LÆTITIA,—I promised to write to you when I should have returned home. Returned home I am, but you may conceive that many, many matters solicit attention and demand arrangement in a house which has lately been turned topsy-turvy in the operation of unroofing. Drawers and cupboards must wait a moment, however, while I fulfil my promise, though it is imperatively necessary that this fulfilment should be achieved with brevity.

My stay in Scotland was short, and what I saw was chiefly com-

prised in Edinburgh and the neighbourhood, in Abbotsford and Melrose, for I was obliged to relinquish my first intention of going from Glasgow to Oban and thence through a portion of the Highlands. But though the time was brief, and the view of objects limited, I found such a charm of situation, association, and circumstances that I think the enjoyment experienced in that little space equalled in degree and excelled in kind all which London yielded during a month's sojourn. Edinburgh compared to London is like a vivid page of history compared to a huge dull treatise on political economy; and as to Melrose and Abbotsford, the very names possess music and magic.

I am thankful to say that on my return home I found papa pretty well. Full often had I thought of him when I was far away; and deeply sad as it is on many accounts to come back to this old house, yet I was glad to be with him once more.

You were proposing, I remember, to go into the country; I trust you are there now and enjoying this fine day in some scene where the air will not be tainted, nor the sunshine dimmed, by London smoke. If your papa, mamma, or any of your sisters are within reach, give them my kindest remembrances—if not, save such remembrances till you see them.—Believe me, my dear Lætitia, yours hurriedly but faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 453

TO GEORGE SMITH

HAWORTH, *August 1st*, 1850.

The little box for me came at the same time as the large one for papa. When you first told me that you had had the Duke's picture framed, and had given it to me, I felt half provoked with you for performing such a work of supererogation, but now, when I see it again, I cannot but acknowledge that, in so doing, you were felicitously inspired. It is his very image, and, as papa said when he saw it, scarcely in the least like the ordinary portraits; not only the expression, but even the form of the head is different, and of a far nobler character. I esteem it a treasure. The lady who left the parcel for me was, it seems, Mrs. Gore. The parcel contained one of her works, *The Hamiltons*, and a very civil and friendly note, in which I find myself addressed as 'Dear Jane.' Papa seems much pleased with the portrait, as do the few other

persons who have seen it, with one notable exception, viz. our old servant, who tenaciously maintains that it is not like—that it is too old-looking—but, as she, with equal tenacity, asserts that the Duke of Wellington's picture is a portrait of 'the Master' (meaning papa), I am afraid not much weight is to be ascribed to her opinion; doubtless she confuses her recollections of me as I was in childhood with present impressions. Requesting always to be very kindly remembered to your mother and sisters, I am yours very thanklessly (according to desire),

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 454

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*August 1st, 1850.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I have certainly felt the late wet weather a good deal and been somewhat bothered with frequently returning colds, and so has papa. About him, I have been far from happy; every cold seems to make and leave him so weak; it is easy to *say* this world is only a scene of probation, but it is a hard thing to *feel*. Give Charlotte Brontë's sincere love to Rosie Ringrose.

My portrait is come from London, and the Duke of Wellington's, and kind letters enough. Papa thinks the portrait looks older than I do: he says the features are far from flattered, but acknowledges that the expression is wonderfully good and life-like.

I left the book called *Social Aspects* at Brookroyd: accept it from me. I may well give it you, for the Author has kindly sent me another copy. Write to me again soon, and believe me, dear Ellen, yours faithfully,

C. B.

### Letter 455

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*August 7th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am truly sorry that I allowed the words to which you refer to escape my lips, since their effect on you has been unpleasant; but try, dear Ellen, to chase every shadow of anxiety from your mind, and, unless the restraint be very disagreeable to you, permit me to add an earnest request that you will broach the subject to me no more. It is the undisguised and most harassing anxiety of others that has fixed in my mind thoughts and

expectations which must canker wherever they take root ; against which every effort of religion or philosophy must at times totally fail ; and subjugation to which is a cruel, terrible fate—the fate, indeed, of him whose life was passed under a sword suspended by a horse-hair. I have had to entreat papa's consideration on this point. My nervous system is soon wrought upon. I should wish to keep it in rational strength and coolness ; but to do so I must determinedly resist the kindly-meant, but too irksome expression of an apprehension, for the realisation or defeat of which I have no possible power to be responsible. At present, I am pretty well, thank God ! Papa, I trust, is no worse, but he complains of weakness. Amelia tells me you are looking well, which I am truly glad to hear, and glad also to learn that you get on pleasantly with the turtle-doves, and even, it seems, have your share of billing and cooing. I own I should be better pleased if the latter were something substantial and serious, and likely to lead to permanent happiness. I am glad to hear a good account of Joe Taylor. Let us hope for the best. Take care of yourself. Good-bye, dear Nell,

C. BRONTË.

*P.S.*—I am going on Monday (D.V.) a journey, whereof the prospect cheers me not at all, to Windermere in Westmoreland, to spend a few days with Sir J. K. Shuttleworth, who has taken a house there for the autumn and winter. I consented to go with reluctance, chiefly to please papa, whom a refusal on my part would have much annoyed ; but I dislike to leave him. I trust he is not worse, but his complaint is still weakness. It is not right to anticipate evil, and to be always looking forward with an apprehensive spirit ; but I think grief is a two-edged sword, it cuts both ways ; the memory of one loss is the anticipation of another.

## Letter 456

TO CHARLOTTE BRONTË

WELLINGTON, *August 13th, 1850.*

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—After waiting about six months we have just got *Shirley*. It was landed from the *Constantinople* on Monday afternoon, just in the thick of our preparations for a 'small party' for the next day. We stopped spreading red blankets over everything (New Zealand way of arranging a room) and opened the



box and read all the letters. Soyer's *Housewife* and *Shirley* were there all right, but Miss Martineau's book was not. In its place was a silly child's tale called *Edward Orland*. This was Joe's fault, no doubt, for I see in one of your letters you suspect him of it. On Tuesday we stayed up dancing till three or four o'clock, what for I can't imagine. However, it was a piece of business done. On Wednesday I began *Shirley* and continued in a curious confusion of mind till now, principally at the handsome foreigner who was nursed in our house when I was a little girl. By the way, you've put him in the servant's bedroom. You make us all talk much as I think we should have done if we'd ventured to speak at all. What a little lump of perfection you've made me! There is a strange feeling in reading it of hearing us all talking. I have not seen the matted hall and painted parlour windows so plain these five years. But my father is not like. He hates well enough and perhaps loves too, but he is not honest enough. It was from my father I learnt not to marry for money nor to tolerate any one who did, and he never would advise any one to do so, or fail to speak with contempt of those who did. *Shirley* is much more interesting than *Jane Eyre*, who never interests you at all until she has something to suffer. All through this last novel there is so much more life and stir that it leaves you far more to remember than the other. Did you go to London about this too! What for? I see by a letter of yours to Mr. Dixon that you *have* been. I wanted to contradict some of your opinions, now I can't. As to when I'm coming home, you may well ask. I have wished for fifteen years to begin to earn my own living; last April I began to try—it is too soon to say yet with what success. I am woefully ignorant, terribly wanting in tact, and obstinately lazy, and almost too old to mend. Luckily there is no other dance for me, so I must work. Ellen takes to it kindly, it gratifies a deep ardent *wish* of hers as of mine, and she is habitually industrious. For *her*, ten years younger, our shop will be a blessing. She may possibly secure an independence, and skill to keep it and use it, before the prime of life is past. As to my writings, you may as well ask the Fates about that too. I can give you no information. I write a page now and then. I never forget or get strange to what I have written. When I read it over it looks very interesting.

MARY TAYLOR.

## Letter 457

TO CHARLOTTE BRONTË

WELLINGTON, N.Z.

MY DEAR MISS BRONTË,—I shall tell you everything I can think of, since you said in one of your letters to Pag that you wished me to write to you. I have been here a year. It seems a much shorter time, and yet I have thought more and done more than I ever did in my life before. When we arrived, Henry and I were in such a hurry to leave the ship that we didn't wait to be fetched, but got into the first boat that came alongside. When we landed we inquired where Waring lived, but hadn't walked far before we met him. I had never seen him before, but he guessed we were the cousins he expected, so caught us and took us along with him. Mary soon joined us, and we went home together. At first I thought Mary was not the least altered, but when I had seen her for about a week I thought she looked rather older. The first night Mary and I sat up till 2 A.M. talking. Next day we went to tea to the Knoxes, Waring's new relations; you have no doubt heard of them. The Doctor is an idle fool and his wife not very much better; he might earn his living if he would, but he won't. In a few days we began to talk about doing something; it seemed the only thing for Henry to do was to buy sheep and go and keep them in the country. He went to look at Rangitike, a large district bought of the natives, it is somewhere on the West Coast between here and Taranaki; he came back and said it was too wet for sheep, but he thought he would have to go there. In November he went to Sydney to buy the sheep, but he found freights too high there, so he settled to wait a bit; and he is waiting yet, that is, he hasn't come back, and we haven't heard a word of or from him for five months. He must have gone into the bush, but if he has he ought to have told us. I wish he'd come back. Mary and I settled we would do something together, and we talked for a fortnight before we decided whether we would have a school or shop; it ended in favour of the shop. Waring thought we had better be quiet, and I believe he still thinks we are doing it for amusement; but he never refuses to help us. He is teaching us book-keeping, and he buys things for us now and then. Mary gets as fierce as a dragon and goes to all the wholesale stores and looks at things, gets patterns, samples, etc., and asks prices, and then comes home, and we talk it over; and then

she goes again and buys what we want. She says the people are always civil to her. Our keeping shop astonishes everybody here ; I believe they think we do it for fun. Some think we shall make nothing of it, or that we shall get tired ; and all laugh at us. Before I left home I used to be afraid of being laughed at, but now it has very little effect upon me.

Mary and I are settled together now : I can't do without Mary and she couldn't get on by herself. I built the house we live in, and we made the plan ourselves, so it suits us. We take it in turns to serve in the shop, and keep the accounts, and do the housework—I mean, Mary takes the shop for a week and I the kitchen, and then we change. I think we shall do very well if no more severe earthquakes come, and if we can prevent fire. When a wooden house takes fire it doesn't stop ; and we have got an oil cask about as high as I am, that would help it. If some sparks go out at the chimney-top the shingles are in danger. The last earthquake but one about a fortnight ago threw down two medicine bottles that were standing on the table and made other things jingle, but did no damage. If we have nothing worse than that I don't care, but I don't want the chimney to come down—it would cost £10 to build it up again. Mary is making me stop because it is nearly 9 P.M. and we are going to Waring's to supper. Good-bye.—Yours truly,

ELLEN TAYLOR.

## Letter 458

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

WELLINGTON, *August 15th*, 1850.

DEAR ELLEN,—Last Monday we stopped working to open a box and read letters. Your pretty thing, what ever is the name of it? came almost the first, and fine amusement it was to open it. What veritable old maids you and Charlotte must be grown if you really use such a thing. Ellen and I pulled out all the things, one after another, and disputed for them. The staylace was particularly amusing ! I have not seen such a thing this five years. But the best was the garters. I have had almost a daily lecture from Ellen because my stockings wrinkled owing to my having been reduced to two bits of tape for the last six months, and being too stingy to buy any more and too idle to knit them. Ellen says you might have known.

Your letter is the most cheerful I have had from you. I suppose 'Charlotte' was or had been with you; or was going to be. It contained more news, too, than any I have received by this ship. Ann's marriage does not seem to have made you more uncomfortable—perhaps the reverse. Was this the news you hinted at in your last but which you would not tell me? I had guessed it was your own marriage that was going to be! I had imagined, too, that Miss Gorham must be the daughter of the Rev. Mr. Gorham who is having such a quarrel with the Bishop of Exeter. Which of course I highly approve of, though I don't know what it's all about. I wish you or Charlotte would give me some particulars of her last London visit. The account of the first one was most interesting.

Ellen is roasting her toes and discussing how little she'll be content with. It seems to be about £200 a year, though it is doubtful if this will do. It is blowing cold and rain and hail—just to make a fire comfortable. She (Ellen) chatters like a pie, and the theme is how much we must have before we go home again. We think it possible to buy and send goods out here after four or five years' experience in shop-keeping.

You and Charlotte ought to be on the other side the table to hear all the nonsense. For the last month or two Ellen has been very well and I too. Before that time she was often very poorly and I had repeatedly *tic douloureux* in the face. We were frightened, shy, and anxious. Neither the shyness nor the anxiety are at an end, as we very well know, but we know what we have to contend with and can never feel so thick a mist round us as there was when we first began. I wish I could give you some account of the amount of our success, but the time is as yet too short to pronounce. The gist of the matter is that John and Joe have lent me £100 and given me £300. Ellen's means are rather less.

Besides nonsense we talk over other things that I never could talk about before she came. Some of them had got to look so strange I used to think sometimes I had dreamt them. Charlotte's books were of this kind. Politics were another thing where I had all the interest to myself, and a number of opinions of my own I had got so used to keep to myself that at last I thought one side of my head filled with crazy stuff.

Is it that your brothers won't give you money that prevents you coming out? You should *plague* them till they are glad to



be rid of you. But I fancy you write more hopefully than you did before. And yet you seem almost turned out of doors by the new arrangement. In fact, there is only your mother that really belongs to you in it.

Joe's admiration of Miss Ringrose is amusing—if it is so. Is she German? or half-German? Have you seen or heard of Halle's chamber concerts? His father was my music master and a genius. His mother is living with him. I have some notion that you are near them, though I believe in point of fact you are as far off as I am. There was a girl of 14 to 20 whom I should much like to hear of.

For some reason—or rather for no reason—I think my hopes this afternoon are peculiarly vivid about coming home again. All the news by last vessel has been good and reacting—the letters have brought it all vividly before me. Keep yourself well and happy, you and Charlotte, till I come, and above all don't turn sulky. We shall meet again yet.

You have both suffered, Charlotte especially. I am older in that way too, but there is sweet in the orange yet, at least I think so.

MARY TAYLOR.

## Letter 459

TO MISS BRONTË

WELLINGTON, N.Z.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—I began a letter to you one bitter cold evening last week, but it turned out such a sad one that I have left it and begun again. I am sitting all alone in my own house, or rather what is to be mine when I've paid for it. I bought it of Henry, when Ellen died, shop and all, and carry on by myself. I have made up my mind not to get any assistance; I have not too much work, and the annoyance of having an unsuitable companion was too great to put up with without necessity. I find now that it was Ellen that made me so busy, and without her to nurse I have plenty of time. I have begun to keep the house very tidy; it makes it less desolate. I take great interest in my trade—as much as I could do in anything that was not *all* pleasure. But the best part of my life is the excitement of arrivals from England. Reading all the news, written and printed, is like living another life separate from this one. The old letters are strange, very, when I begin to read them, but quite

familiar notwithstanding. So are all the books and newspapers though I never see a human being to whom it would ever occur to me to mention anything I read in them. I see your *nom de guerre* in them sometimes. I saw a criticism on the preface to the second edition of *Wuthering Heights*. I saw it among the notables who attended Thackeray's lectures. I have seen it somehow connected with Sir J. K. Shuttleworth. Did he want to marry you or only to lionise you? *Or was it somebody else?*

Your life in London is a 'new country' to me which I cannot even picture to myself. You seem to like it—at least some things in it, and yet your late letters to Mrs. Joe Taylor talk of low spirits and illness. 'What's the matter with you now?' as my mother used to say, as if it were the twentieth time in a fortnight. It is really melancholy that now, in the prime of life, in the flush of your hard-earned prosperity, you can't be well! Did not Miss Martineau improve you? If she did, why not try her and her plan again? But I suppose if you had hope and energy to try, you would be well. Well, it's nearly dark, and you will surely be well when you read this, so what's the use of writing? I should like well to have some details of your life, but how can I hope for it? I have often tried to give you a picture of mine, but I have not the skill. I get a heap of details, most paltry in themselves and not enough to give you an idea of the whole. O for one hour's talk! You are getting too far off and beginning to look strange to me. Do you look as you used to do, I wonder? What do you and Ellen Nussey talk about when you meet? There! it's dark.

*Sunday night.*—I have let the vessel go that was to take this. As there (are) others going soon I did not much care. I am in the height of cogitation whether to send for some worsted stockings, etc. They will come next year at this time, and who can tell what I shall want then, or shall be doing! Yet hitherto we have sent such orders and have guessed or known pretty well what we should want. I have just been looking over a list four pages long in Ellen's handwriting. These things ought to come by the next vessel or part of them at least. Then, tired of that, I began to read some pages of 'my book,' intending to write some more, but went on reading for pleasure. I often do this and find it very interesting indeed. It does not get on fast tho'. I have written about one volume and a half. It's full of music, poverty, disputing, politics, and original views of life. I

can't for the life of me bring the lover into it, nor tell what he's to do when he comes. Of the men generally I can never tell what they'll do next. The women I understand pretty well, and rare tracasserie there is among them; they are perfectly feminine in that respect at least.

I am just now in a state of famine. No books and no news from England for this two months. I am thinking of visiting a circulating library from sheer dulness. If I had more time I should get melancholy. No one can prize activity more than I do, little interest though there is in it. I never long am without it but a gloom comes over me. The cloud seems to be always there behind me, and never quite out of sight but when I keep on at a good rate. Fortunately the more I work the better I like it. I shall take to scrubbing the floor before it's dirty, and polishing pans on the outside in my old age. It is the only thing that gives me an appetite for dinner.

I suppose if the vessel coming from England is not lost I shall soon be too busy to write if the last vessel were sailing that ever was to go. So take this in anticipation, as I can't write an answer to your letters until they get too old to answer.

PAG.

Give my love to Ellen Nussey.

## CHAPTER XXIV

## TWO VISITS TO THE ENGLISH LAKES

THE English Lakes have many happy literary associations, and among the long list of names which that delightful district recalls one must never neglect to include that of Charlotte Brontë. She paid two visits there in this year, 1850, the first to Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, the second to Harriet Martineau.

## Letter 460

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË

THE BRIERY, WINDERMERE,  
*August 19th, 1850.*

DEAR PAPA,—I reached this place yesterday evening at eight o'clock, after a safe though rather tedious journey. I had to change carriages three times and to wait an hour and a half at Lancaster. Sir James came to meet me at the station; both he and Lady Shuttleworth gave me a very kind reception. This place is exquisitely beautiful, though the weather is cloudy, misty, and stormy; but the sun bursts out occasionally and shows the hills and the lake. Mrs. Gaskell is coming here this evening, and one or two other people. Miss Martineau, I am sorry to say, I shall not see, as she is already gone from home for the autumn.

Be kind enough to write by return of post and tell me how you are getting on and how you are. Give my kind regards to Tabby and Martha, and—Believe me, dear papa, your affectionate daughter,

C. BRONTË.

This was Miss Brontë's first meeting with her future biographer. It is interesting to record Mrs. Gaskell's impression as conveyed to a friend at the time and repeated in the *Life*.



## Letter 461

MRS. GASKELL TO A FRIEND<sup>1</sup>

Dark when I got to Windermere station; a drive along the level road to Low-wood; then a stoppage at a pretty house, and then a pretty drawing-room, in which were Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, and a little lady in a black silk gown, whom I could not see at first for the dazzle in the room; she came up and shook hands with me at once. I went up to unbonnet, etc.; came down to tea. The little lady worked away and hardly spoke, but I had time for a good look at her. She is (as she calls herself) *undeveloped*, thin, and more than half a head shorter than I am; soft brown hair, not very dark; eyes (very good and expressive, looking straight and open at you) of the same colour as her hair; a large mouth; the forehead square, broad, and rather overhanging. She has a very sweet voice; rather hesitates in choosing her expressions, but when chosen they seem without an effort admirable, and just befitting the occasion; there is nothing overstrained, but perfectly simple. . . . After breakfast we four went out on the lake, and Miss Brontë agreed with me in liking Mr. Newman's *Soul*, and in liking *Modern Painters*, and the idea of the *Seven Lamps*; and she told me about Father Newman's lectures at the Oratory in a very quiet, concise, graphic way. . . . She is more like Miss —— than any one in her ways—if you can fancy Miss —— to have gone through suffering enough to have taken out every spark of merriment, and to be shy and silent from the habit of extreme, intense solitude. Such a life as Miss Brontë's I have never heard of before. —— described her home to me as in a village of grey stone houses, perched up on the north side of a bleak moor, looking over sweeps of bleak moors, etc., etc.

We were only three days together, the greater part of which was spent in driving about, in order to show Miss Brontë the Westmoreland scenery, as she had never been there before. We were both included in an invitation to drink tea quietly at Fox How; and then I saw how severely her nerves were taxed by the effort of going amongst strangers. We knew beforehand that the number of the party would not exceed twelve; but she suffered

<sup>1</sup> From the Haworth edition of the *Life*, p. 470.

the whole day from an acute headache brought on by apprehension of the evening.

Briery Close was situated high above Low-wood, and of course commanded an extensive view and wide horizon. I was struck by Miss Brontë's careful examination of the shape of the clouds and the signs of the heavens, in which she read, as from a book, what the coming weather would be. I told her that I saw she must have a view equal in extent at her own home. She said that I was right, but that the character of the prospect from Haworth was very different; that I had no idea what a companion the sky became to any one living in solitude—more than any inanimate object on earth—more than the moors themselves.

## Letter 462

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *August 26th*, 1850.

DEAR ELLEN,—You said I should stay longer than a week in Westmoreland; you ought by this time to know me better. Is it my habit to keep dawdling at a place long after the time I first fixed on for departing? I have got home, and I am thankful to say papa seems, to say the least, no worse than when I left him, yet I wish he were stronger. My visit passed off very well; I am very glad I went. The scenery is, of course, grand; could I have wandered about amongst those hills *alone*, I could have drank in all their beauty; even in a carriage with company, it was very well. If I could only have dropped unseen out of the carriage and gone away by myself in amongst those grand hills and sweet dales, I should have drank in the full power of this glorious scenery. In company this can hardly be. Sometimes, while Sir James was warning me against the faults of the artist class, all the while vagrant artist instincts were busy in the mind of his listener. Sir James was all the while as kind and friendly as he could be: he is in much better health. Lady Shuttleworth never got out, being confined to the house with a cold, but fortunately there was Mrs. Gaskell, the authoress of *Mary Barton*, who came to the Briery the day after me. I was truly glad of her companionship. She is a woman of the most genuine talent, of cheerful, pleasing, and cordial manners, and, I believe, of a kind and good heart.

Miss Martineau was from home ; she always leaves her house at Ambleside during the Lake season, to avoid the influx of visitors to which she would otherwise be subject.

I went out to spend the evening once at Fox How, the residence of Dr. Arnold's widow. There was a considerable party, amongst the rest the son and daughter of the Chevalier Bunsen, the Prussian Ambassador, etc., etc.

I forgot to tell you that about a week before I went to Westmoreland there came an invitation to Harden Grange, Mr. Busfeild Ferrand's place, which I declined ; two or three days after, a large party made their appearance here, consisting of Mrs. Ferrand and sundry other ladies and two gentlemen, one tall, stately, black-haired and whiskered, who turned out to be Lord John Manners, the other not so distinguished-looking, shy and a little queer, who was Mr. Smythe, the son of Lord Strangford. I found Mrs. Ferrand a true lady in manners and appearance. She is the sister or daughter, I forget which, of Lord Blantyre, very gentle and unassuming, not so pretty as Lady Shuttleworth, but I like her better. Lord John Manners brought in his hand two brace of grouse for papa, which was a well-timed present ; a day or two before, papa had been wishing for some.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 463

TO MRS. GASKELL

*August 27th, 1850.*

Papa and I have just had tea ; he is sitting quietly in his room, and I in mine ; 'storms of rain' are sweeping over the garden and churchyard : as to the moors, they are hidden in thick fog. Though alone I am not unhappy ; I have a thousand things to be thankful for, and, amongst the rest, that this morning I received a letter from you, and that this evening I have the privilege of answering it.

I do not know the *Life of Sydney Taylor* ;<sup>1</sup> whenever I have the opportunity I will get it. The little French book you mention shall also take its place on the list of books to be procured as soon as possible. It treats a subject interesting to all women—

<sup>1</sup> *Selections from the Writings of J. Sydney Taylor, with a Brief Sketch of his Life.* London, 1843. John Sydney Taylor (1795-1841) was a London journalist of Irish origin.

perhaps more especially to single women, though, indeed, mothers like you study it for the sake of their daughters. The *Westminster Review* is not a periodical I see regularly, but some time since I got hold of a number—for last January, I think—in which there was an article entitled ‘Woman’s Mission’ (the phrase is hackneyed), containing a great deal that seemed to me just and sensible. Men begin to regard the position of woman in another light than they used to do; and a few men, whose sympathies are fine and whose sense of justice is strong, think and speak of it with a candour that commands my admiration. They say, however—and, to an extent, truly—that the amelioration of our condition depends on ourselves. Certainly there are evils which our own efforts will best reach; but as certainly there are other evils—deep-rooted in the foundations of the social system—which no efforts of ours can touch; of which we cannot complain; of which it is advisable not too often to think.

I have read Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*,<sup>1</sup> or rather part of it; I closed the book when I had got about half-way. It is beautiful; it is mournful; it is monotonous. Many of the feelings expressed bear, in their utterance, the stamp of truth; yet, if Arthur Hallam had been somewhat nearer Alfred Tennyson—his brother instead of his friend—I should have distrusted this rhymed, and measured, and printed monument of grief. What change the lapse of years may work I do not know; but it seems to me that bitter sorrow, while recent, does not flow out in verse.

I promised to send you Wordsworth’s *Prelude*,<sup>2</sup> and, accordingly, despatch it by this post; the other little volume shall follow in a day or two. I shall be glad to hear from you whenever you have time to write to me, *but you are never on any account to do this except when inclination prompts and leisure permits*. I should never thank you for a letter which you had felt it a task to write.

After the meeting at Sir J. K. Shuttleworth’s, Miss Brontë sent Mrs. Gaskell the volume of poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell.

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* was published in 1850.

<sup>2</sup> *The Prelude; or, Growth of a Poet’s Mind: an Autobiographical Poem*, by William Wordsworth, was published, after his death in 1850, by Edward Moxon, Dover Street, London.



## Letter 464

TO MRS. GASKELL

[Undated.]

The little book of rhymes was sent by way of fulfilling a rashly made promise; and the promise was made to prevent you from throwing away four shillings in an injudicious purchase. I do not like my own share of the work, nor care that it should be read: Ellis Bell's I think good and vigorous, and Acton's have the merit of truth and simplicity. Mine are chiefly juvenile productions, the restless effervescence of a mind that would not be still. In those days the sea too often 'wrought and was tempestuous,' and weed, sand, shingle—all turned up in the tumult. This image is much too magniloquent for the subject, but you will pardon it.

## Letter 465

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *September 2nd*, '50.

DEAR ELLEN,—Poor Mrs. Atkinson it seems is gone; I saw her death in the papers; it is another lesson on the nature of life, on its strange brevity and, in many instances, apparent futility. I should think her child, conceived and fostered in the arms of death, born on the very brink of its mother's grave, cannot live, and I trust it will not: it could only be reared to die; the seeds of disease must be thickly sown in its constitution. I wonder if Mrs. Atkinson suffered much at last, or if she died peacefully.

Joe Taylor came here on Saturday, but Tom Dixon, who was to have accompanied him, was prevented from executing his intention. I regretted his absence, for I by no means coveted the long *tête-à-tête* with Joe Taylor. However, it passed off pretty well. He is satisfied now with his own prospects, which makes him, on the surface, satisfied with other things; he spoke of Amelia with content and approbation. He looks forward to marriage as a sort of harbour where he is to lay up his now somewhat battered vessel in quiet moorings. He has seen all he wants to see of life, now he is prepared to settle. I listened to all with equa-

nimity and cheerfulness, not assumed but real, for papa is now somewhat better, his appetite and spirits are improved, and that eases my mind of cankering anxiety. My own health, too, is I think really benefited by the late changes of air and scene. I fancy, at any rate, that I feel stronger. Still I mused, in my own way, on Joe Taylor's character, its depth and scope I believe are ascertained.

I saw the governess at Sir J. K. Shuttleworth's, she looked a little better and more cheerful. She was almost as pleased to see me as if we had been related, and when I bid her good-bye, expressed an earnest hope that I would soon come again. The children seem fond of her, and on the whole obedient: two great alleviations of the inevitable evils of her position.

Cheer up, dear Nell, and try not to stagnate, or when you cannot help it, and when your heart is constricted and oppressed, remember what life is and must be to all—some moments of sunshine alternating with many of overclouded and often tempestuous darkness. Humanity cannot escape its fate, which is to drink a mixed cup. Let us believe that the gall and the vinegar are salutary.

I return Amelia's letter. She has written to me.—Yours  
faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 466

TO JAMES TAYLOR

*September 5th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—The reappearance of the *Athenæum* is very acceptable, not merely for its own sake—though I esteem the opportunity of its perusal a privilege—but because it comes from Cornhill and, as a weekly token of the remembrance of friends, cheers and gives pleasure. I only fear that its regular transmission may become a task to you; in that case, discontinue it at once.

I did indeed enjoy my trip to Scotland, and yet I saw little of the face of the country, nothing of its grander or finer scenic features; but Edinburgh, Melrose, Abbotsford, these three in themselves sufficed to stir feelings of such deep interest and admiration that, neither at the time did I regret, nor have I since regretted, the want of wider space to diffuse the sense of enjoyment. There was room and variety enough to be very happy,

and 'enough,' the proverb says, 'is as good as a feast.' The Queen was right indeed to climb Arthur Seat with her husband and children; I shall not soon forget how I felt, when, having reached its summit, we all sat down and looked over the city, towards the sea and Leith, and the Pentland Hills. No doubt you are proud of being a native of Scotland, proud of your country, her capital, her children, and her literature. You cannot be blamed.

The article in the *Palladium* is one of those notices over which an author rejoices with trembling. He rejoices to find his work finely, fully, fervently appreciated, and trembles under the responsibility such appreciation seems to devolve upon him. I am counselled to wait and watch. D.V., I will do so. Yet it is harder work to wait with the hands bound and the observant and reflective faculties at their silent unseen work, than to labour mechanically.

I need not say how I felt the remarks on *Wuthering Heights*;<sup>1</sup> they woke the saddest yet most grateful feelings; they are true, they are discriminating; they are full of late justice—but it is very late—alas! in one sense too late. Of this, however, and of the pang of regret for a light prematurely extinguished, it is not wise to speak much. Whoever the author of this article may be, I remain his debtor.

Yet, you see, even here, *Shirley* is disparaged in comparison with *Jane Eyre*, and yet I took great pains with *Shirley*. I did not hurry; I tried to do my best, and my own impression was that it was not inferior to the former work; indeed I had bestowed on it more time, thought, and anxiety: but great part of it was written under the shadow of impending calamity, and the last volume I cannot deny was composed in the eager, restless endeavour to combat mental sufferings that were scarcely tolerable.

You sent the tragedy of *Galileo Galilei*, by Samuel Brown, in one of the Cornhill parcels; it contained, I remember, passages of very great beauty. Whenever you send any more books (but that must not be till I return what I now have) I should be glad if you would include amongst them the Life of Dr. Arnold. Do you know also the Life of Sydney Taylor? I am not familiar even with the name, but it has been recommended to me as a work

<sup>1</sup> In the *Palladium* of September 1850 Mr. Sydney Dobell declared that 'there were passages in *Wuthering Heights* of which any novelist, past or present, might be proud.'

meriting perusal. Of course, when I name any book, it is always understood that it should be quite convenient to send it.

With thanks for your kind letter,—I am, my dear sir, yours  
very sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 467

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*September 5th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I trust your suggestion for Miss Kavanagh's benefit will have all success. It seems to me truly felicitous and excellent, and, I doubt not, she will think so too. The last class of female character will be difficult to manage: there will be nice points in it—yet, well managed, both an attractive and instructive book might result therefrom. One thing may be depended upon in the execution of this plan. Miss Kavanagh will commit no error, either of taste, judgment, or principle; and even when she deals with the feelings, I would rather follow the calm course of her quiet pen than the flourishes of a more redundant one where there is not strength to restrain as well as ardour to impel.

I fear I seemed to you to speak coolly of the beauty of the Lake scenery. The truth is, it was, as scenery, exquisite—far beyond anything I saw in Scotland; but it did not give me half so much pleasure, because I saw it under less congenial auspices. Mr. Smith and Sir J. K. Shuttleworth are two different people with whom to travel. I need say nothing of the former—you know him. The latter offers me his friendship, and I do my best to be grateful for the gift; but his is a nature with which it is difficult to assimilate—and where there is no assimilation, how can there be real regard? Nine parts out of ten in him are utilitarian—the tenth is artistic. This tithe of his nature seems to me at war with all the rest—it is just enough to incline him restlessly towards the artist class, and far too little to make him one of them. The consequent inability to *do* things which he *admires*, embitters him I think—it makes him doubt perfections and dwell on faults. Then his notice or presence scarcely tend to set one at ease or make one happy: he is worldly and formal. But I must stop—have I already said too much? I think not, for you will feel it is said in confidence and will not repeat it.



The article in the *Palladium* is indeed such as to atone for a hundred unfavourable or imbecile reviews. I have expressed what I think of it to Mr. Taylor, who kindly wrote me a letter on the subject. I thank you also for the newspaper notices, and for some you sent me a few weeks ago.

I should much like to carry out your suggestions respecting a reprint of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* in one volume, with a prefatory and explanatory notice of the authors; but the question occurs, Would Newby claim it? I could not bear to commit it to any other hands than those of Mr. Smith. *Wildfell Hall* it hardly appears to me desirable to preserve. The choice of subject in that work is a mistake: it was too little consonant with the character, tastes, and ideas of the gentle, retiring, inexperienced writer. She wrote it under a strange, conscientious, half-ascetic notion of accomplishing a painful penance and a severe duty. Blameless in deed and almost in thought, there was from her very childhood a tinge of religious melancholy in her mind. This I ever suspected, and I have found amongst her papers mournful proofs that such was the case. As to additional compositions, I think there would be none, as I would not offer a line to the publication of which my sisters themselves would have objected.

I must conclude or I shall be too late for the post.—Believe me, yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 468

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

September 13th, 1850.

MY DEAR SIR,—Mr. Newby undertook first to print 350 copies of *Wuthering Heights*, but he afterwards declared he had only printed 250. I doubt whether he could be induced to return the £50 without a good deal of trouble—much more than I should feel justified in delegating to Mr. Smith. For my own part, the conclusion I drew from the whole of Mr. Newby's conduct to my sisters was that he is a man with whom it is desirable to have little to do. I think he must be needy as well as tricky—and if he is, one would not distress him, even for one's rights.

If Mr. Smith thinks right to reprint *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, I would prepare a preface comprising a brief and

simple notice of the authors, such as might set at rest all erroneous conjectures respecting their identity—and adding a few poetical remains of each.

In case this arrangement is approved, you will kindly let me know, and I will commence the task (a sad, but, I believe, a necessary one), and send it when finished.—I am, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 469

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*September 14th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I found after sealing my last note to you that I had forgotten after all to enclose Amelia's letter; however, it appears it does not signify. While I think of it I must refer to an act of petty larceny committed by me when I was last in Brookroyd. Do you remember lending me a parasol which I should have left with you when we parted at Leeds. I unconsciously carried it away in my hand. You shall have it when you next come to Haworth.

I wish, dear Ellen, you would tell me what is the 'twaddle about my marrying, etc.,' which you hear. If I knew the details I should have a better chance of guessing the quarter from which such gossip comes; as it is, I am quite at a loss. Whom am I to marry? I think I have scarcely seen a single man with whom such a union would be possible since I left London. Doubtless there are men whom if I chose to encourage I might marry, but no matrimonial lot is even remotely offered me which seems to me truly desirable: and even if that were the case, there would be many obstacles; the least allusion to such a thing is most offensive to papa.

An article entitled 'Curren Bell' has lately appeared in the *Palladium*, a new periodical published in Edinburgh. It is an eloquent production and one of such warm sympathy and high appreciation as I had never expected to see, it makes mistakes about authorship, etc., but these I hope one day to set right. Mr. Taylor (the little man) first informed me of this article. I was somewhat surprised to receive his letter, having concluded nine months ago that there would be no more correspondence from that quarter. I enclose you a note from him received subsequently, in answer to my acknowledgment. Read it and

tell me exactly how it impresses you regarding the writer's character, etc. His little newspaper<sup>1</sup> disappeared for some weeks, and I thought it was gone to the tomb of the Capulets; however, it has reappeared with an explanation that he had feared its regular transmission might rather annoy than gratify. I told him this was a mistake, that I was well enough pleased to receive it, but hoped he would not make a task of sending it. For the rest I cannot consider myself placed under any personal obligation by accepting this newspaper, for it belongs to the establishment of Smith & Elder. This little Taylor is deficient neither in spirit nor sense.

The report about my having published again is, of course, an arrant lie.

Give my kind regards to all, and believe me, yours faithfully,  
C. B.

Papa continues in an invalid state, still subject to bronchitis, and often complaining of weakness. I have wished him to consult Mr. Teale, or to try change of air, but his objection to both these alternatives is insuperable. I think I am pretty well. Write soon.

## Letter 470

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*September 20th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I herewith send you a very roughly written copy of what I have to say about my sisters. When you have read it you can better judge whether the word 'Notice' or 'Memoir' is the most appropriate. I think the former. Memoir seems to me to express a more circumstantial and different sort of account. My aim is to give a just idea of their identity, not to write any narration of their simple, uneventful lives. I depend on you for faithfully pointing out whatever may strike you as faulty. I could not write it in the conventional form—*that* I found impossible.

It gives me real pleasure to hear of your son's success. I trust he may persevere and go on improving, and give his parents cause for satisfaction and honest pride.

<sup>1</sup> *The Athenæum*, which Mr. Taylor had sent as a method of literary courtship.

I am truly pleased, too, to learn that Miss Kavanagh has managed so well with Mr. Colburn. Her position seems to me one deserving of all sympathy. I often think of her. Will her novel soon be published? Somehow I expect it to be interesting.

I certainly did hope that Mrs. Gaskell would offer her next work to Smith & Elder. She and I had some conversation about publishers—a comparison of our literary experiences was made. She seemed much struck with the differences between hers and mine, though I did not enter into details or tell her all. Unless I greatly mistake, she and you and Mr. Smith would get on well together; but one does not know what causes there may be to prevent her from doing as she would wish in such a case. I think Mr. Smith will not object to my occasionally sending her any of the Cornhill books that she may like to see. I have already taken the liberty of lending her Wordsworth's *Prelude*, as she was saying how much she wished to have the opportunity of reading it.

I do not tack remembrances to Mrs. Williams and your daughters and Miss Kavanagh to all my letters, because that makes an empty form of what should be a sincere wish, but I trust this mark of courtesy and regard, though rarely expressed, is always understood.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 471

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *September 27th*, 1850.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—When I tell you that I have already been to the Lakes this season, and that it is scarcely more than a month since I returned, you will understand that it is no longer within my power to accept your kind invitation.

I wish I could have gone to you. I wish your invitation had come first; to speak the truth, it would have suited me better than the one by which I profited. It would have been pleasant, soothing, in many ways beneficial, to have spent two weeks with you in your cottage-lodgings. But these reflections are vain. I have already had my excursion, and there is an end of it. Sir J. K. Shuttleworth is residing near Windermere, at a house called 'The Briery,' and it was there I was staying for a little while in



August. He very kindly showed me the scenery—as it can be seen from a carriage—and I discerned that the ‘Lake Country’ is a glorious region, of which I had only seen the similitude in dream—waking or sleeping. But, my dear Miss Wooller, I only half enjoyed it, because I was only half at my ease. Decidedly I find it does not agree with me to prosecute the search of the picturesque in a carriage; a waggon, a spring-cart, even a post-chaise might do, but the carriage upsets everything. I longed to slip out unseen, and to run away by myself in amongst the hills and dales. Erratic and vagrant instincts tormented me, and these I was obliged to control, or rather, suppress, for fear of growing in any degree enthusiastic, and thus drawing attention to the ‘lioness,’ the authoress, the artist. Sir J. K. Shuttleworth is a man of ability and intellect, but not a man in whose presence one willingly unbends.

You say you suspect I have found a large circle of acquaintance by this time. No, I cannot say that I have. I doubt whether I possess either the wish or the power to do so. A few friends I should like to know well; if such knowledge brought proportionate regard I could not help concentrating my feelings. Dissipation, I think, appears synonymous with dilution. However, I have as yet scarcely been tried. During the month I spent in London in the spring, I kept very quiet, having the fear of ‘lionising’ before my eyes. I only went out once to dinner, and was once present at an evening party; and the only visits I have paid have been to Sir J. K. Shuttleworth and my publishers. From this system I should not like to depart. As far as I can see, indiscriminate visiting tends only to a waste of time and a vulgarising of character. Besides, it would be wrong to leave papa often; he is now in his 74th year, the infirmities of age begin to creep upon him. During the summer he has been much harassed by chronic bronchitis, but, I am thankful to say, he is now somewhat better. I think my own health has derived benefit from change and exercise.

You ask after Ellen Nussey. When I saw Ellen, about two months ago, she looked remarkably well. I sometimes hear small fragments of gossip which amuse me. Somebody professes to have authority for saying that ‘When Miss Brontë was in London she neglected to attend divine service on the Sabbath, and in the week spent her time in going about to balls, theatres, and operas.’ On the other hand, the London quidnuncs make my seclusion a matter of wonder, and devise twenty romantic fictions

to account for it. Formerly I used to listen to report with interest and a certain credulity; I am now grown deaf and sceptical. Experience has taught me how absolutely devoid of foundations her stories may be.

With the sincere hope that your own health is better, and kind remembrances to all old friends whenever you see them or write to them (and whether or not their feeling to me has ceased to be friendly, which I fear is the case in some instances),—I am, my dear Miss Wooler, always yours, affectionately and respectfully,

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 472

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*October 2nd, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have to thank you for the care and kindness with which you have assisted me throughout in correcting these *Remains*.

Whether, when they are published, they will appear to others as they do to me, I cannot tell. I hope not. And indeed I suppose what to me is bitter pain will only be soft pathos to the general public.

Miss Martineau has several times lately asked me to go and see her; and though this is a dreary season for travelling northward, I think if papa continues pretty well I shall go in a week or two. I feel to my deep sorrow, to my humiliation, that it is not in my power to bear the canker of constant solitude. I had calculated that when shut out from every enjoyment, from every stimulus but what could be derived from intellectual exertion, my mind would rouse itself perforce. It is not so. Even intellect, even imagination, will not dispense with the ray of domestic cheerfulness, with the gentle spur of family discussion. Late in the evenings, and all through the nights, I fall into a condition of mind which turns entirely to the past—to memory; and memory is both sad and relentless. This will never do, and will produce no good. I tell you this that you may check false anticipations. You cannot help me, and must not trouble yourself in any shape to sympathise with me. It is my cup, and I must drink it, as others drink theirs.

—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 473

TO G. H. LEWES

October 3rd, 1850.

I am sure you will have thought me very dilatory in returning the books you so kindly lent me; the fact is, having some other books to send, I retained yours to enclose them in the same parcel.

Accept my thanks for some hours of pleasant reading. Balzac was for me quite a new author; and in making his acquaintance, through the medium of *Modeste Mignon* and *Illusions Perdues*, you cannot doubt I have felt some interest. At first I thought he was going to be painfully minute, and fearfully tedious; one grew impatient of his long parade of detail, his slow revelation of unimportant circumstances, as he assembled his personages on the stage; but by-and-by I seemed to enter into the mystery of his craft, and to discover, with delight, where his force lay: is it not in the analysis of motive, and in a subtle perception of the most obscure and secret workings of the mind? Still, admire Balzac as we may, I think we do not like him; we rather feel towards him as towards an ungenial acquaintance who is for ever holding up in strong light our defects, and who rarely draws forth our better qualities.

Truly I like George Sand better.

Fantastical, fanatical, unpractical enthusiast as she often is—far from truthful as are many of her views of life—misled, as she is apt to be, by her feelings—George Sand has a better nature than M. de Balzac; her brain is larger, her heart warmer than his. The *Lettres d'un Voyageur* are full of the writer's self; and I never felt so strongly, as in the perusal of this work, that most of her very faults spring from the excess of her good qualities: it is this excess which has often hurried her into difficulty, which has prepared for her enduring regret.

But I believe her mind is of that order which disastrous experience teaches, without weakening, or too much disheartening, and, in that case, the longer she lives the better she will grow. A hopeful point in all her writings is the scarcity of false French sentiment; I wish I could say its absence; but the weed flourishes here and there even in the *Lettres*.

C. B.

## Letter 474

A FRIEND TO MRS. GASKELL<sup>1</sup>*October 3rd, 1850.*

Though the weather was drizzly we resolved to make our long-planned excursion to Haworth; so we packed ourselves into the buffalo skin, and that into the gig, and set off about eleven. The rain ceased, and the day was just suited to the scenery—wild and chill—with great masses of cloud glooming over the moors, and here and there a ray of sunshine covertly stealing through, and resting with a dim magical light upon some high bleak village; or darting down into some deep glen, lighting up the tall chimney, or glistening on the windows and wet roof of the mill which lies couching in the bottom. The country got wilder and wilder as we approached Haworth; for the last four miles we were ascending a huge moor, at the very top of which lies the dreary, black-looking village of Haworth. The village street itself is one of the steepest hills I have ever seen, and the stones are so horribly jolting that I should have got out and walked with W——, if possible, but, having once begun the ascent, to stop was out of the question. At the top was the inn where we put up, close by the church; and the clergyman's house, we were told, was at the top of the churchyard. So through that we went—a dreary, dreary place, literally *paved* with rain-blackened tombstones, and all on the slope; for at Haworth there is on the highest height a higher still, and Mr. Brontë's house stands considerably above the church. There was the house before us, a small oblong stone house, with not a tree to screen it from the cutting wind; but how we were to get at it from the churchyard we could not see! There was an old man in the churchyard, brooding like a ghoul over the graves, with a sort of grim hilarity on his face. I thought he looked hardly human; however, he was human enough to tell us the way, and presently we found ourselves in the little bare parlour. Presently the door opened, and in came a superannuated mastiff, followed by an old gentleman very like Miss Brontë, who shook

<sup>1</sup> Describing a visit to Haworth in 1850. See Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*, Haworth edition, pp. 485-7.



hands with us, and then went to call his daughter. A long interval, during which we coaxed the old dog, and looked at a picture of Miss Brontë, by Richmond, the solitary ornament of the room, looking strangely out of place on the bare walls, and at the books on the little shelves, most of them evidently the gift of the authors since Miss Brontë's celebrity. Presently she came in, and welcomed us very kindly, and took me upstairs to take off my bonnet, and herself brought me water and towels. The uncarpeted stone stairs and floors, the old drawers propped on wood, were all scrupulously clean and neat. When we went into the parlour again we began talking very comfortably, when the door opened and Mr. Brontë looked in; seeing his daughter there, I suppose he thought it was all right, and he retreated to his study on the opposite side of the passage, presently emerging again to bring W—— a country newspaper. This was his last appearance till we went. Miss Brontë spoke with the greatest warmth of Miss Martineau, and of the good she had gained from her. Well! we talked about various things—the character of the people, about her solitude, etc.—till she left the room to help about dinner, I suppose, for she did not return for an age. The old dog had vanished; a fat curly-haired dog honoured us with his company for some time, but finally manifested a wish to get out, so we were left alone. At last she returned, followed by the maid and dinner, which made us all more comfortable; and we had some very pleasant conversation, in the midst of which time passed quicker than we supposed, for at last W—— found that it was half-past three, and we had fourteen or fifteen miles before us. So we hurried off, having obtained from her a promise to pay us a visit in the spring; and the old gentleman having issued once more from his study to say good-bye, we returned to the inn, and made the best of our way homewards.

Miss Brontë put me so in mind of her own 'Jane Eyre.' She looked smaller than ever, and moved about so quietly, and noiselessly, just like a little bird, as Rochester called her, barring that all birds are joyous, and that joy can never have entered that house since it was first built; and yet, perhaps, when that old man married, and took home his bride, and children's voices and feet were heard about the house, even that desolate crowded graveyard and biting blast could not quench cheerfulness and hope. Now there is something touching in the sight of that little creature entombed in such a place, and moving about herself like

a spirit, especially when you think that the slight still frame encloses a force of strong fiery life, which nothing has been able to freeze or extinguish.

## Letter 475

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

October 3rd, 1850.

DEAR ELLEN,—There is nothing wrong, and I am writing you a line as you desire, merely to say that I *am* busy just now. Mr. Smith wishes to reprint some of Emily's and Anne's works, with a few little additions from the papers they have left; and I have been closely engaged in revising, transcribing, preparing a preface, notice, etc. As the time for doing this is limited, I am obliged to be industrious. I found the task at first exquisitely painful and depressing; but regarding it in the light of a *sacred duty*, I went on, and now can bear it better. It is work, however, that I cannot do in the evening, for if I did I should have no sleep at night. Papa, I am thankful to say, is in improved health, and so, I think, am I; I trust you are the same.

I have just received a kind letter from Miss Martineau. She has got back to Ambleside, and had heard of my visit to the Lakes. She expressed her regret, etc., at not being at home.

I trust you are well. I am very decent indeed in bodily health, and am both angry and surprised at myself for not being in better spirits; for not growing accustomed, or at least resigned, to the solitude and isolation of my lot. But my late occupation left a result for some days, and indeed still, very painful. The reading over of papers, the renewal of remembrances brought back the pang of bereavement, and occasioned a depression of spirits well-nigh intolerable. For one or two nights, I scarcely knew how to get on till morning; and when morning came, I was still haunted with a sense of sickening distress. I tell you these things, because it is absolutely necessary to me to have some *relief*. You will forgive me, and not trouble yourself, or imagine that I am one whit *worse*, than I say. It is quite a mental ailment, and I believe and hope it is better now. I think so, because I can *speak* about it, which I never can when grief is at its worst.

I thought to find occupation and interest in writing, when alone at home, but hitherto my efforts have been vain; the deficiency of

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every stimulus is so complete. You will recommend me, I dare say, to go from home; but that does no good, even if I could again leave papa with an easy mind (thank God! he is better). I cannot describe what a time of it I had after my return from London, Scotland, etc. There was a reaction that sunk me to the earth; the deadly silence, solitude, desolation, were awful; the craving for companionship, the hopelessness of relief, were what I should dread to feel again.

Dear Nell, when I think of you, it is with a compassion and tenderness that scarcely cheer me. Mentally, I fear, you also are too lonely and too little occupied. It seems our doom, for the present at least. May God in His mercy help us to bear it.—  
Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

### Letter 476

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*October 8th, 1850.*

DEAR NELL,—Being too lazy to send for a Post Office Order, I have sent the accompanying coin in a little box—tell me whether it reaches you safely. Should it be too late to get the card-case, get something else, anything you think will please, and offer it with my kind love.

I am glad to hear Mr. Clapham so fully meets your approbation, and hope he will continue to do so.

Instead of sending a card for the 15th, I think I shall write a little note.

Poor Mercy! I pity her, and yet I am angry with her. What a wretched misfortune to be deficient in sense and self-government!

Miss Wooler's idea amazed me—it is perfectly groundless. I am unconscious of the slightest change—my regard for her is altogether unaltered. I wish she may mention it to me herself.

I shall certainly not come till you get your 'stirs' in some measure over. Good-bye, dear Nell. C. B.

### Letter 477

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*October 16th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—On the whole it is perhaps as well that the last paragraph of the Preface should be omitted, for I believe it

was not expressed with the best grace in the world. You must not, however, apologise for your suggestion—it was kindly meant and, believe me, kindly taken; is was not *you* I misunderstood—not for a moment, I never misunderstand you—I was thinking of the critics and the public, who are always crying for a moral like the Pharisees for a sign. Does this assurance quite satisfy you?

I forgot to say that I had already heard, first from Miss Martineau, and subsequently through an intimate friend of Sydney Yendys (whose real name is Mr. Dobell) that it was to the author of the *Roman* we are indebted for that eloquent article in the *Palladium*. I am glad you are going to send his poem, for I much wished to see it.

May I trouble you to look at a sentence in the Preface which I have erased, because on reading it over I was not quite sure about the scientific correctness of the expressions used. Metal, I know, will burn in vivid-coloured flame, exposed to galvanic action, but whether it is consumed, I am not sure. Perhaps you or Mr. Taylor can tell me whether there is any blunder in the term employed—if not, it might stand.—I am, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 478

TO JAMES TAYLOR.

*November 6th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have just finished reading the Life of Dr. Arnold, but now when I wish, in accordance with your request, to express what I think of it, I do not find the task very easy; proper terms seem wanting. This is not a character to be dismissed with a few laudatory words; it is not a one-sided character; pure panegyric would be inappropriate. Dr. Arnold (it seems to me) was not quite saintly; his greatness was cast in a mortal mould; he was a little severe—almost a little hard; he was vehement and somewhat oppugnant. Himself the most indefatigable of workers, I know not whether he could have understood or made allowance for a temperament that required more rest, yet not to one man in twenty thousand is given his giant faculty of labour; by virtue of it he seems to me the greatest of Working Men. Exacting he might have been then on this point, and granting that he were so, and a little hasty, stern and positive, those were his sole faults (if indeed that can be called



a fault which in no shape degrades the individual's own character but is only apt to oppress and overstrain the weaker nature of his neighbours). Afterwards come his good qualities. About these there is nothing dubious. Where can we find justice, firmness, independence, earnestness, sincerity, fuller and purer than in him?

But this is not all, and I am glad of it. Besides high intellect and stainless rectitude, his letters and his life attest his possession of the most true-hearted affection. Without this, however we might admire, we could not love him, but with it I think we love him much. A hundred such men, fifty, nay, ten or five such righteous men might save any country, might victoriously champion any cause.

I was struck, too, by the almost unbroken happiness of his life; a happiness resulting chiefly, no doubt, from the right use to which he put that health and strength which God had given him, but also owing partly to a singular exemption from those deep and bitter griefs which most human beings are called on to endure. His wife was what he wished; his children were healthy and promising; his own health was excellent; his undertakings were crowned with success; even Death was kind, for however sharp the pains of his last hours, they were but brief. God's blessing seems to have accompanied him from the cradle to the grave. One feels thankful to know that it has been permitted to any man to live such a life.

When I was in Westmoreland last August, I spent an evening at Fox How, where Mrs. Arnold and her daughters still reside. It was twilight as I drove to the place, and almost dark ere I reached it; still I could perceive that the situation was exquisitely lovely. The house looked like a nest half buried in flowers and creepers, and, dusk as it was, I could feel that the valley and the hills round were beautiful as imagination could dream. Mrs. Arnold seemed an amiable, and must once have been a very pretty, woman; her daughters I liked much. There was present also a son of Chevalier Bunsen, with his wife or rather bride. I had not then read Dr. Arnold's Life; otherwise, the visit would have interested me even more than it actually did.

Mr. Williams told me (if I mistake not) that you had recently visited the 'Lake Country.' I trust you enjoyed your excursion, and that our English Lakes did not suffer too much by comparison in your memory with the Scottish Lochs.—I am, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 479

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*November 9th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have read Lord John Russell's letter with very great zest and relish, and think him a spirited, sensible little man for writing it. He makes no old-womanish outcry of alarm and expresses no exaggerated wrath. One of the best paragraphs is that which refers to the Bishop of London and the Puseyites. Oh! I wish Dr. Arnold were yet living, or that a second Dr. Arnold could be found! Were there but ten such men amongst the hierarchs of the Church of England, she might bid defiance to all the scarlet hats and stockings in the Pope's gift. Her sanctuaries would be purified, her rites reformed, her withered veins would swell again with vital sap; but it is not so.

It is well that *truth* is *indestructible*—that ruin cannot crush nor fire annihilate her divine essence. While forms change and institutions perish, '*truth* is great and shall prevail.'

I am truly glad to hear that Miss Kavanagh's health is improved. You can send her book whenever it is most convenient. I received from Cornhill the other day a periodical containing a portrait of Jenny Lind—a sweet, natural, innocent peasant-girl face, curiously contrasted with an artificial fine-lady dress. I *do* like and esteem Jenny's character. Yet not long since I heard her torn to pieces by the tongue of detraction—scarcely a virtue left—twenty odious defects imputed.

There was likewise a most faithful portrait of R. H. Horne, with his imaginative forehead and somewhat foolish-looking mouth and chin, indicating that mixed character which I should think he owns. Mr. Horne writes well. That tragedy on the *Death of Marlowe* reminds me of some of the best of Dumas' dramatic pieces.—Yours very sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 480

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*November 26th 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—There is no chance of my getting either to Brookroyd or Hunsworth; I cannot leave home at all just now, and when I *do* go, it ought to be to see Miss Martineau. She has

asked me twice, in terms so kind, considerate, and yet so urgent, that it would seem wrong to withstand her. Sir J. K. Shuttleworth has likewise asked me again, but I should only go there for a day, if at all. Do you know whether Miss Wooler is still at the Lakes? If she is, I would (in case I went) dedicate some days to her.

Papa continues pretty well; Martha is better, but not quite strong. I trust and hope my headaches are going to give me a respite; they have been very annoying, not from their violence but frequency. I mean to answer Amelia's note in a day or two.  
—Yours faithfully, C. B.

## Letter 481

TO SYDNEY DOBELL

HAWORTH, KEIGHLEY, NEAR YORKSHIRE,  
December 8th, 1850

I offer this little book<sup>1</sup> to my critic in the *Palladium*, and he must believe it accompanied by a tribute of the sincerest gratitude; not so much for anything he has said of myself as for the noble justice he has rendered to one dear to me as myself—perhaps dearer—and perhaps one kind word spoken for her awakens a deeper, tenderer sentiment of thankfulness than eulogies heaped on my own head. As you will see when you have read the biographical notice, my sister cannot thank you herself; she is gone out of your sphere and mine, and human blame and praise are nothing to her now. But to me, for her sake, they are something still; it revived me for many a day to find that, dead as she was, the work of her genius had at last met with worthy appreciation.

Tell me, when you have read the introduction, whether any doubts still linger in your mind respecting the authorship of *Wuthering Heights*, *Wildfell Hall*, etc. Your mistrust did me some injustice; it proved a general conception of character such as I should be sorry to call mine; but these false ideas will naturally arise when we only judge an author from his works. In fairness I must also disclaim the flattering side of the portrait. I am no 'young Penthesilea *mediis in millibus*,' but a plain country parson's daughter.

Once more I thank you, and that with a full heart.

C. BRONTË.

<sup>1</sup> The second edition of *Wuthering Heights*.

## Letter 482

TO MRS. GASKELL

*December 13th, 1850.*

MY DEAR MRS. GASKELL,—Miss ——'s kindness and yours is such that I am placed in the dilemma of not knowing how adequately to express my sense of it. *This* I know, however, very well—that if I *could* go and be with you for a week or two in such a quiet south-country house, and with such kind people as you describe, I should like it much. I find the proposal marvellously to my taste ; it is the pleasantest, gentlest, sweetest temptation possible ; but, delectable as it is, its solicitations are by no means to be yielded to without the sanction of reason, and therefore I desire for the present to be silent, and to stand back till I have been to Miss Martineau's, and returned home, and considered well whether it is a scheme as right as agreeable.

Meantime the mere thought does me good.

## Letter 483

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

THE KNOLL, AMBLESIDE,  
*December 18th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I can write to you now, for I am away from home, and relieved temporarily, at least, by change of air and scene, from the heavy burden of depression which, I confess, has for nearly three months been sinking me to the earth. I shall never forget last autumn ! Some days and nights have been cruel ; but now, having once told you this, I need say no more on the subject. My loathing of solitude grew extreme ; my recollection of my sisters intolerably poignant. I am better now. I am at Miss Martineau's for a week. Her house is very pleasant, both within and without ; arranged at all points with admirable neatness and comfort. Her visitors enjoy the most perfect liberty ; what she claims for herself she allows them. I rise at my own hour, breakfast alone (she is up at five, and takes a cold bath, and a walk by starlight, and has finished breakfast and got to her work by seven o'clock). I pass the morning in the drawing-room, she in her study. At two o'clock we meet ; work, talk, and walk together till five, her dinner-hour ; spend the evening together, when she converses fluently and abundantly, and with the most



complete frankness. I go to my own room soon after ten; she sits up writing letters till twelve. She appears exhaustless in strength and spirits, and indefatigable in the faculty of labour. She is a great and a good woman; of course not without peculiarities, but I have seen none as yet that annoy me. She is both hard and warm-hearted, abrupt and affectionate, liberal and despotic. I believe she is not at all conscious of her own absolutism. When I tell her of it, she denies the charge warmly; then I laugh at her. I believe she almost rules Ambleside. Some of the gentry dislike her, but the lower orders have a great regard for her. I will not stay more than a week because about Christmas relatives and guests will come. Sir J. and Lady Shuttleworth are coming here to dine on Thursday. Write to me and say how you are. Kind regards to all.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 484

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

AMBLESIDE, *December 21st, '50.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I have managed to get off going to Sir J. K. Shuttleworth's by a promise to come some other time; I thought I really should like to spend 2 or 3 days with you before going home, therefore if it is not inconvenient for you I will come on Monday and stay till Thursday. I shall be at Bradford (D.V.) at 10 minutes past 2 Monday afternoon, and can take a cab at the station forward to Birstall. I have truly enjoyed my visit. I have seen a good many people, and all have been so marvellously kind, not the least so the family of Dr. Arnold. Miss Martineau I relish inexpressibly. Sir James has been almost every day to take me a drive; I begin to admit in my own mind that he is sincerely benignant to me. I grieve to say he looks to me as if wasting away. Lady S. is ill, near her confinement; she cannot go out, and I have not seen her. Till we meet, good-bye.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 485

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË

AMBLESIDE, *December 21st, 1850.*

DEAR PAPA,—I think I shall not come home till Thursday. If all be well I shall leave here on Monday and spend a day or

two with Ellen Nussey. I have enjoyed my visit exceedingly. Sir J. K. Shuttleworth has called several times and taken me out in his carriage. He seems very truly friendly ; but, I am sorry to say, he looks pale and very much wasted. I greatly fear he will not live very long unless some change for the better soon takes place. Lady Shuttleworth is ill too, and cannot go out. I have seen a good deal of Dr. Arnold's family and like them much. As to Miss Martineau, I admire her and wonder at her more than I can say. Her powers of labour, of exercise, and social cheerfulness are beyond my comprehension. In spite of the unceasing activity of her colossal intellect she enjoys robust health. She is a taller, larger, and more strongly made woman than I had imagined from that first interview with her. She is very kind to me, though she must think I am a very insignificant person compared to herself. She has just been into the room to show me a chapter of her history which she is now writing, relating to the Duke of Wellington's character and his proceedings in the Peninsula. She wanted an opinion on it, and I was happy to be able to give a very approving one. She seems to understand and do him justice.

You must not direct any more letters here as they will not reach me after to-day. Hoping, dear papa, that you are well, and with kind regards to Tabby and Martha,—I am, your affectionate daughter,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 486

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*December 27th, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I got home all right yesterday soon after 2 o'clock, and found papa, thank God, well and free from cold. To-day some amount of sickliness and headache is bothering me, but nothing to signify. How did you and Mr. — get on after I left you, and how is your cough? No better I fear for this misty day.

The Christmas books waiting for me were, as I expected, from Thackeray, Mrs. Gaskell, and Ruskin. No letter from Mr. Williams. I feel uneasy, but do not like to write. The *Examiner* is very sore about my Preface, because I did not make it a special exception in speaking of the mass of critics. The soreness is unfortunate and gratuitous, for in my mind I certainly excepted it. Another paper shows painful sensitiveness on the same account ; but it does not matter—these things are all transitory. Write very soon. Love to all.—Yours faithfully,

C. B.

## Letter 487

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*December —, 1850.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I thank you for your two notes, which though unanswered, are not unregarded. There is a great deal of sickness here, though papa continues pretty well, and so do I, with the exception of headaches which seem to beset me more in Autumn than at other seasons. Martha, however, has been very ill some days, and though better, is still in bed ; this makes me busy, as her sister is only to be had at intervals. Take care and keep indoors on damp, misty days. Amelia's conduct to you always strikes me as giving proof of a genuinely affectionate and amiable disposition. I duly sent my card to the newly married pair at Hunsworth. To-day's fog has brought me a sick headache, under the influence of which I must cut short this note.

—Yours faithfully, C. B.

## Letter 488

TO JAMES TAYLOR

*January 1st, 1851.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I am sorry there should have occurred an irregularity in the transmission of the papers ; it has been owing to my absence from home. I trust the interruption has occasioned no inconvenience. Your last letter evinced such a sincere and discriminating admiration for Dr. Arnold, that perhaps you will not be wholly uninterested in hearing that during my late visit to Miss Martineau I saw much more of Fox How and its inmates, and daily admired, in the widow and children of one of the greatest and best men of his time, the possession of qualities the most estimable and endearing. Of my kind hostess herself I cannot speak in terms too high. Without being able to share all her opinions, philosophical, political, or religious, without adopting her theories, I yet find a worth and greatness in herself, and a consistency, benevolence, perseverance in her practice such as wins the sincerest esteem and affection. She is not a person to be judged by her writings alone, but rather by her own deeds and life—than which nothing can be more exemplary or nobler. She

seems to me the benefactress of Ambleside, yet takes no sort of credit to herself for her active and indefatigable philanthropy. The government of her household is admirably administered ; all she does is well done, from the writing of a history down to the quietest female occupation. No sort of carelessness or neglect is allowed under her rule, and yet she is not over strict nor too rigidly exacting ; her servants and her poor neighbours love as well as respect her.

I must not, however, fall into the error of talking too much about her, merely because my own mind is just now deeply impressed with what I have seen of her intellectual power and moral worth. Faults she has, but to me they appear very trivial weighed in the balance against her excellences.

With every good wish of the season,—I am, my dear sir, yours  
very sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 489

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*January 1st, 1851.*

MY DEAR SIR,—May I beg that a copy of *Wuthering Heights* may be sent to Mrs. Gaskell ; her present address is 3 Sussex Place, Regent's Park. She has just sent me the *Moorland Cottage*. I felt disappointed about the publication of that book, having hoped it would be offered to Smith, Elder & Co. ; but it seems she had no alternative, as it was Mr. Chapman himself who asked her to write a Christmas book. On my return home yesterday week I found two packets from Cornhill directed in two well-known hands waiting for me. You are all very, very good.

I trust to have derived benefit from my visit to Miss Martineau. A visit more interesting I certainly never paid. If self-sustaining strength can be acquired from example, I ought to have got good. But my nature is not hers ; I could not make it so though I were to submit it seventy times seven to the furnace of affliction, and discipline it for an age under the hammer and anvil of toil and self-sacrifice. Perhaps if I was like her I should not admire her so much as I do. She is somewhat absolute, though quite unconsciously so ; but she is likewise kind, with an affection at once abrupt and constant, whose sincerity you cannot doubt. It was delightful to sit near her in the evenings and hear her converse,



myself mute. She speaks with what seems to me a wonderful fluency and eloquence. Her animal spirits are as unflagging as her intellectual powers. I was glad to find her health excellent. I believe neither solitude nor loss of friends would break her down. I saw some faults in her, but somehow I liked them for the sake of her good points. It gave me no pain to feel insignificant, mentally and corporeally, in comparison with her.

Trusting that you and yours are well, and sincerely wishing you all a happy new year,—I am, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 490

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 8th, 1851.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I sent yesterday the *Leader* newspaper, which you must always send to Hunsworth as soon as you have done with it. I will continue to forward it as long as I get it.

I am trying the wet sheet, and like it. I think it has done me good. Enclosed is a letter received a few days since from Mr. Smith; I wish you to read it because it gives a very fair notion both of his temper and mind. Read, return, and tell me what you think of it.

Thackeray has given dreadful trouble by his want of punctuality, and printers, binders, gilders, and colourers have tried their patience. Mr. Williams has written also: he says if Mr. Smith had not helped him out with his 'vigour, energy, and method,' he must have sunk under the day and night labour of the last few weeks. How is your cough? Write soon.

C. B.

## Letter 491

TO LÆTITIA WHEELWRIGHT

*HAWORTH, January 12th, 1851.*

DEAR LÆTITIA,—A spare moment must and shall be made for you, no matter how many letters I have to write (and just now there is an influx). In reply to your kind inquiries, I have to say that my stay in London and excursion to Scotland did me good—much good at the time; but my health was again somewhat sharply tried at the close of autumn, and I lost in some days

of indisposition the additional flesh and strength I had previously gained. This resulted from the painful task of looking over letters and papers belonging to my sisters. Many little mementos and memoranda conspired to make an impression inexpressibly sad, which solitude deepened and fostered till I grew ill. A brief trip to Westmoreland has, however, I am thankful to say, revived me again, and the circumstance of papa being just now in good health and spirits gives me many causes for gratitude. When we have but one precious thing left we think much of it.

I have been staying a short time with Miss Martineau. As you may imagine, the visit proved one of no common interest. She is certainly a woman of wonderful endowments, both intellectual and physical, and though I share few of her opinions, and regard her as fallible on certain points of judgment, I must still accord her my sincerest esteem. The manner in which she combines the highest mental culture with the nicest discharge of feminine duties filled me with admiration, while her affectionate kindness earned my gratitude.

Your description of the magician Paxton's crystal palace is quite graphic. Whether I shall see it or not I don't know. London will be so dreadfully crowded and busy this season, I feel a dread of going there.

Compelled to break off, I have only time to offer my kindest remembrances to your whole circle, and my love to yourself.—  
Yours ever, C. BRONTË.

It was during this visit to Ambleside in the closing days of 1850 that Charlotte Brontë and Matthew Arnold met.

'At seven,' writes Mr. Arnold from Fox How (December 21, 1850), 'came Miss Martineau and Miss Brontë (Jane Eyre); talked to Miss Martineau (who blasphemes frightfully) about the prospects of the Church of England, and, wretched man that I am, promised to go and see her cow-keeping miracles<sup>1</sup> to-morrow—I, who hardly know a cow from a sheep. I talked to Miss Brontë (past thirty and plain, with expressive grey eyes, though) of her curates, of French novels, and her education in a school at Brussels,

<sup>1</sup> Some experiments on a farm of two acres.

and sent the lions roaring to their dens at half-past nine, and came to talk to you.’<sup>1</sup>

By the light of this ‘impression,’ it is not a little interesting to see what Miss Brontë, ‘past thirty and plain,’ thought of Mr. Matthew Arnold!

## Letter 492

TO JAMES TAYLOR, CORNHILL

*January 15th, 1851.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I fancy the imperfect way in which my last note was expressed must have led you into an error, and that you must have applied to Mrs. Arnold the remarks I intended for Miss Martineau. I remember whilst writing about ‘my hostess’ I was sensible to some obscurity in the term; permit me now to explain that it referred to Miss Martineau.

Mrs. Arnold is, indeed, as I judge from my own observations no less than from the unanimous testimony of all who really know her, a good and amiable woman, but the intellectual is not her forte, and she has no pretensions to power or completeness of character. The same remark, I think, applies to her daughters. You admire in them the kindest feeling towards each other and their fellow-creatures, and they offer in their home circle a beautiful example of family unity, and of that refinement which is sure to spring thence; but when the conversation turns on literature or any subject that offers a test for the intellect, you usually felt that their opinions were rather imitative than original, rather sentimental than sound. Those who have only seen Mrs. Arnold once will necessarily, I think, judge of her unfavourably; her manner on introduction disappointed me sensibly, as lacking that genuineness and simplicity one seemed to have a right to expect in the chosen life-companion of Dr. Arnold. On my remarking as much to Mrs. Gaskell and Sir J. K. Shuttleworth, I was told for my consolation it was a ‘conventional manner,’ but that it vanished on closer acquaintance; fortunately this last assurance proved true. It is observable that Matthew Arnold, the eldest son, and the author of the volume of poems to which you allude, inherits his mother’s defect. Striking and prepossessing in appearance, his manner displeases from its

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, collected and arranged by George W. E. Russell.

seeming foppery. I own it caused me at first to regard him with regretful surprise; the shade of Dr. Arnold seemed to me to frown on his young representative. I was told, however, that 'Mr. Arnold improved upon acquaintance.' So it was: ere long a real modesty appeared under his assumed conceit, and some genuine intellectual aspirations, as well as high educational acquirements, displaced superficial affectations. I was given to understand that his theological opinions were very vague and unsettled, and indeed he betrayed as much in the course of conversation. Most unfortunate for him, doubtless, has been the untimely loss of his father.

My visit to Westmoreland has certainly done me good. Physically, I was not ill before I went there, but my mind had undergone some painful laceration. In the course of looking over my sisters' papers, mementos, and memoranda, that would have been nothing to others, conveyed for me so keen a sting. Near at hand there was no means of lightening or effacing the sad impression by refreshing social intercourse; from my father, of course, my sole care was to conceal it—age demanding the same forbearance as infancy in the communication of grief. Continuous solitude grew more than I could bear, and, to speak truth, I was glad of a change. You will say that we ought to have power in ourselves either to bear circumstances or to bend them. True, we should do our best to this end, but sometimes our best is unavailing. However, I am better now, and most thankful for the respite.

The interest you so kindly express in my sisters' works touches me home. Thank you for it, especially as I do not believe you would speak otherwise than sincerely. The only notices that I have seen of the new edition of *Wuthering Heights* were those in the *Examiner*, the *Leader*, and the *Athenæum*. That in the *Athenæum* somehow gave me pleasure: it is quiet but respectful—so I thought, at least.

You asked whether Miss Martineau made me a convert to mesmerism? Scarcely; yet I heard miracles of its efficacy and could hardly discredit the whole of what was told me. I even underwent a personal experiment; and though the result was not absolutely clear, it was inferred that in time I should prove an excellent subject.

The question of mesmerism will be discussed with little reserve, I believe, in a forthcoming work of Miss Martineau's, and I have



some painful anticipations of the manner in which other subjects, offering less legitimate ground for speculation, will be handled.

You mention the *Leader*; what do you think of it? I have been asked to contribute; but though I respect the spirit of fairness and courtesy in which it is on the whole conducted, its principles on some points are such that I have hitherto shrunk from the thought of seeing my name in its columns.

Thanking you for your good wishes,—I am, my dear sir, yours  
sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## CHAPTER XXV

## QUIET DAYS AT HAWORTH

FOUR or five quiet months at Haworth preceded Charlotte Brontë's sixth visit to London—the most interesting that she was to know. The period was noteworthy mainly on account of Mr. James Taylor's assiduous courtship and its defeat, his departure from England, and Charlotte's self-analysis thereon.

## Letter 493

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 20th, 1851.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Thank you heartily for the two letters. You seem very gay at present, and provided you only take care not to catch cold I am not sorry to hear it—a little movement, cheerfulness, stimulus, is not only beneficial but necessary.

Your last letter but one, dear Ellen, made me smile. I think the undercurrent simply amounts to this—a kind of natural liking and sense of something congenial. Were there no vast barrier of fortune, etc., etc., there is perhaps enough of personal regard to make things possible which are now impossible. If men and women married because they liked each other's temper, look, conversation, nature, and so on, the chance you allude to might be admitted as a chance, but other reasons regulate matrimony, reasons of convenience, of connection, of money. Meantime, I am content to have him as a friend, and pray God to continue to me the common-sense to look on one so young, so rising, so hopeful, in no other light.

That hint about the Rhine disturbs me; I am not made of stone, and what is mere excitement to him is fever to me. However it is a matter for the future, and long to look forward to. As I see it now, the journey is out of the question, for many reasons. I cannot conceive either his mother or his sisters relishing it, and all London would gabble like a countless host of geese.

Good-bye, dear Nell. Heaven grant us both some quiet wisdom, and strength not merely to bear the trial of pain, but to resist the lure of pleasure when it comes in such a shape as our better judgment disapproves.

C. BRONTË.

Letter 494

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 30th, 1851.*

DEAR NELL,—I am very sorry to hear that Amelia is again so far from well—but I think both she and Joe should try and not be too anxious—even if matters do not prosper this time, all may go as well some future day. I think it is not these *early* mishaps that break the constitution, but those which occur in a much later stage. She must take heart—there may yet be a round dozen of little Joe Taylors to look after—run after—to sort and switch and train up in the way they should go—that is, with a generous use of pickled birch. From whom do you think I have received a couple of notes lately? From Amelia Wooler. They are returned from the Continent it seems, and are now at Torquay. The first note touched me a little by what I thought its subdued tone—I trusted her character might be greatly improved; there were indeed traces of the ‘old Adam,’ but such as I was willing to overlook. I answered her soon and kindly, in reply I received to-day a longish letter—full of claptrap sentiment and humbugging attempts at fine writing, in each production the old trading spirit peeps out; she asks for autographs, it seems she had read in some paper that I was staying with Miss Martineau, thereupon she applies for specimens of her handwriting and Wordsworth’s, and Southey’s, and my own. The account of her health, if given by any one else, would grieve and alarm me; she talks of fearing that her constitution is almost broken by repeated trials, and intimates a doubt as to whether she shall live long: but remembering her of old, I have good hopes that this may be a mistake. Her ‘beloved Papa and Mama’ and her ‘precious sister’ she says are living and ‘gradely’—(that last is my word, I don’t know whether they use it in Birstall as they do here, it means in a middling way).

You are to say no more about ‘Jupiter’ and ‘Venus,’<sup>1</sup> what do

<sup>1</sup> George Smith and Charlotte Brontë. It was frequently stated by Ellen Nussey and by Sir Wemyss Reid that Mr. Smith proposed to Charlotte Brontë, but there is no kind of evidence of this, and I think it improbable.

you mean by such heathen trash? The fact is, no fallacy can be wilder and I won't have it hinted at even in jest, because my common-sense laughs it to scorn. The idea of the 'little man' shocks me less—it would be a more likely match if 'matches' were at all in question, which *they are not*. He still sends his little newspaper—and the other day there came a letter of a bulk, volume, pith, judgment and knowledge, worthy to have been the product of a giant. You may laugh as much and as wickedly as you please—but the fact is there is a quiet constancy about this, my diminutive and red-haired friend, which adds a foot to his stature—turns his sandy locks dark, and altogether dignifies him a good deal in my estimation. However, I am not bothered by much vehement ardour—there is the nicest distance and respect preserved now, which makes matters very comfortable.

This is all nonsense—Nell—and so you will understand it.—  
Yours very faithfully,

C. B.

Write again soon.

The name of Miss Martineau's coadjutor is Atkinson. She often writes to me with exceeding cordiality.

## Letter 495

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*February 1st, 1851.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I cannot lose any time in telling you that your letter, after all, gave me heart-felt satisfaction, and such a feeling of relief as it would be difficult to express in words. The fact is, what goads and tortures me is not any anxiety of my own to publish another book, to have my name before the public, to get cash, etc., but a haunting fear that my dilatoriness disappoints others. Now the 'others' whose wish on the subject I really care for, reduces itself to my father and Cornhill, and since Cornhill ungrudgingly counsels me to take my own time, I think I can pacify such impatience as my dear father naturally feels. Indeed, your kind and friendly letter will greatly help me.

Since writing the above, I have read your letter to papa. Your arguments had weight with him: he approves, and I am content. I now only regret the necessity of disappointing the *Palladium*, but that cannot be helped.—Good-bye, my dear sir, yours very sincerely,

C. BRONTË.



Letter 496

TO JAMES TAYLOR

February 11th, 1851.

MY DEAR SIR,—Have you yet read Miss Martineau's and Mr. Atkinson's new work, *Letters on the Nature and Development of Man*. If you have not, it would be worth your while to do so. Of the impression this book has made on me I will not now say much. It is the first exposition of avowed Atheism and Materialism I have ever read; the first unequivocal declaration of disbelief in the existence of a God or a Future Life I have ever seen. In judging of such exposition and declaration one would wish entirely to put aside the sort of instinctive horror they awaken, and to consider them in an impartial spirit and collected mood. This I find it difficult to do. The strangest thing is that we are called on to rejoice over this hopeless blank, to receive this bitter bereavement as great gain, to welcome this unutterable desolation as a state of pleasant freedom. Who could do this if he would? Who would do it if he could?

Sincerely—for my own part—do I wish to find and know the Truth, but if this be Truth, well may she guard herself with mysteries and cover herself with a veil. If this be Truth, Man or Woman who beholds her can but curse the day he or she was born. I said, however, I would not dwell on what I thought; I wish rather to hear what some other person thinks; some one whose feelings are unapt to bias his judgment. Read the book, then, in an unprejudiced spirit, and candidly say what you think of it; I mean, of course, if you have time, *not otherwise*.

Thank you for your last letter; it seemed to me very good; with all you said about the *Leader* I entirely agree.—Believe me, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

Letter 497

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

February 26th, 1851.

DEAR ELLEN,—You ought always to conclude that when I don't write, it is simply because I have nothing particular to say. Be sure that ill news will travel fast enough, and good news too when such commodity comes. If I could often *be* or *seem* to be in brisk spirits—I might write oftener, but as times go, a glimpse of sunshine now and then is as much as one has a right to expect. However, I get on, very decently.

I am now and then tempted to break through my resolution of not asking you to come before summer, and to ask you to come to this Patmos in a week or two, but it would be dull—very dull for you. I also received a letter from Mary Taylor, written not in high spirits, but still showing hopeful prospects. Also one from Ellen Taylor, by which I think her health must be better. Is Mrs. Joe Taylor out of bed yet? and, especially, is she out of danger of the apprehended mishap? I was not seriously vexed about your telling her of my prediction, only momentarily annoyed, because I knew, of course, from her it would go to her spouse—and it was not precisely the thing one would have said to him; however, I put a good face on it, and repeated it with additions to herself.

I hope Mary's trip from home will do her good, both physically and mentally. I return Mrs. Gorham's letter; it is very kind and complimentary. What would you say to coming here the week after next, to stay only just so long as you could comfortably bear the monotony. If the weather were fine and the moors dry I should not mind so much, we could walk for change.—Yours faithfully,

C. B.

### Letter 498

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

WELLINGTON, *March 11th*, 1851.

DEAR ELLEN,—Your letter made me ashamed of myself, as it reminded me how long I have neglected answering your letters. I am now going to answer it sentence by sentence as I should do if I could sit down and write the moment I read it. I am glad Joe has taken it into his head to marry some one who knows my friends and who is therefore likely to learn to think well of me. I hope you will, both you and Charlotte Brontë, keep up your acquaintance with Amelia, and each of you send news of the other as good as you can find to write.

It must be gloomy indeed for Charlotte to see her father's health declining. It is frightful to see death coming to take the last, and one can scarcely calculate the effects on a weakened, painstruck mind like Charlotte's. It seems to me as if the triumphs she has had, had only opened to her new sources of pain. She thinks or rather feels more of the criticism than the praise. In spite of her strenuous endeavour she cannot look at

the cheerful side for sadness at present with her. You yourself seem in much better spirits. How do you manage it?

I wish you were sitting here by this quiet candle-light, and I would talk to you by the hour of how we were getting on. How we were looking for a ship from England—what we sold to-day. How intend to do when the said ship comes and we have no room or next to none to put the things she is to bring. How eagerly we open the packages and scold for all the things that are not according to order. How we work! and lift, and carry, and knock boxes open as if we were carpenters by trade; and sit down in the midst of the mess when we are quite tired, and ask what time it is, and find it is the middle of the afternoon and we've forgotten our dinner! And then we settle to have some tea and eggs, and go on reading letters all the time we're eating, and don't give over working till bedtime, and take a new number of *David Copperfield* to bed with us and drop asleep at the second page.

In quieter times we are somewhat lazy. There is not more than employment for one. As we don't keep the house particularly tidy, the other one might do a great deal. But somehow not being forced to it, we never do it. We ought to go out and draw (ask Joe to show you our last wonders in that way), but we find it dull going alone. Then perhaps we ought to write, but don't like, for we might possibly be interrupted. We see some company—not much, but I think much better than we should in the same circumstances in England. Classes are forced to mix more here, or there would be no society at all. This circumstance is much to our advantage, for there are not many educated people of our standing. The women are the same everywhere, never educated, and so far as female friends go, I think our present set have as much principle and kindness as most of those we left, while they have certainly more energy. You need not tell the Birstallians my opinion of them. Probably they are not worse than other women, but never called upon to stand alone or allowed to act for themselves, of course they lose their wits in time. Don't lose my letter in Church Lane or thereabouts. Some one writes to know if it is true that Miss Brontë was jilted by a curate—or by three in succession, I forgot which—pray ask her! I have told people of my acquaintance with the writer of *Jane Eyre*, and gained myself a great literary reputation thereby. Mama has written to Waring abusing Miss

Brontë for writing *Shirley*, and Waring thereupon asked to read it. He says the characters are all unfaithful, and stoutly denies that ever my father talked broad Yorkshire. He seems to have forgotten home altogether. He once described minutely how he should like to have a room finished and furnished if he were rich; and he described our old dining-room in every point, and said he didn't know he'd ever seen such a room! He has a house of his own now and wife and children, none of whom ever saw Gomersal nor ever will do! We're getting old, Ellen, and out of date! Fare thee well till another quiet evening. M. TAYLOR.

### Letter 499

TO JAMES TAYLOR, CORNHILL

*March 22nd, 1851.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Yesterday I despatched a box of books to Cornhill, including the number of the *North British Review* which you kindly lent me. The article to which you particularly directed my attention was read with pleasure and interest, and if I do not now discuss it more at length, it is because I am well aware how completely your attention must be at present engrossed, since, if I rightly understood a brief paragraph in Mr. Smith's last note, you are now on the eve of quitting England for India.

I will limit myself, then, to the expression of a sincere wish for your welfare and prosperity in this undertaking, and to the hope that the great change of climate will bring with it no corresponding risk to health. I should think you will be missed in Cornhill, but doubtless 'business' is a Moloch which demands such sacrifices.

I do not know when you go, nor whether your absence is likely to be permanent or only for a time; whichever it be, accept my best wishes for your happiness, and my farewell, if I should not again have the opportunity of addressing you.—Believe me, sincerely yours, C. BRONTË.

### Letter 500

TO JAMES TAYLOR, CORNHILL

*March 24th, 1851.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I had written briefly to you before I received yours, but I fear the note would not reach you in time. I will



now only say that both my father and myself will have pleasure in seeing you on your return from Scotland—a pleasure tinged with sadness certainly, as all partings are, but still a pleasure.

I do most entirely agree with you in what you say about Miss Martineau's and Mr. Atkinson's book. I deeply regret its publication for the lady's sake; it gives a death-blow to her future usefulness. Who can trust the word, or rely on the judgment, of an avowed atheist?

May your decision in the crisis through which you have gone result in the best effect on your happiness and welfare; and indeed, guided as you are by the wish to do right and a high sense of duty, I trust it cannot be otherwise. The change of climate is all I fear; but Providence will overrule this too for the best—in Him you can believe and on Him rely. You will want, therefore, neither solace nor support, though your lot be cast as a stranger in a strange land.—I am, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

When you shall have definitely fixed the time of your return southward, write me a line to say on what day I may expect you at Haworth.

C. B.

## Letter 501

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 5th, 1851.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Mr. Taylor has been and is gone; things are just as they were. I only know in addition to the slight information I possessed before, that this Indian undertaking is necessary to the continued prosperity of the firm of Smith, Elder & Co., and that he, Taylor, alone was pronounced to possess the power and means to carry it out successfully—that mercantile honour, combined with his own sense of duty, obliged him to accept the post of honour and of danger to which he has been appointed, that he goes with great personal reluctance, and that he contemplates an absence of five years.

He looked much thinner and older. I saw him very near and once through my glass; the resemblance to Branwell struck me forcibly, it is marked. He is not ugly, but very peculiar; the lines in his face show an inflexibility, and I must add, a hardness of character which do not attract. As he stood near me, as he

looked at me in his keen way, it was all I could do to stand my ground tranquilly and steadily, and not to recoil as before. It is no use saying anything if I am not candid—I avow then, that on this occasion, predisposed as I was to regard him very favourably—his manners and his personal presence scarcely pleased me more than at the first interview. He gave me a book at parting, requesting in his brief way, that I would keep it for his sake, and adding hastily, ‘I shall hope to hear from you in India—your letters *have* been, and *will* be a greater refreshment than you can think or I can tell.’

And so he is gone, and stern and abrupt little man as he is—too often jarring as are his manners—his absence and the exclusion of his idea from my mind—leave me certainly with less support and in deeper solitude than before.

You see, dear Nell—we are still precisely on the same level—you are not isolated. I feel that there is a certain mystery about this transaction yet, and whether it will ever be cleared up to me I do not know; however, my plain duty is to wean my mind from the subject, and if possible to avoid pondering over it. In his conversation he seemed studiously to avoid reference to Mr. Smith individually—speaking always of the ‘house,’—the ‘firm.’ He seemed throughout quite as excited and nervous as when I first saw him. I feel that in his way he has a regard for me; a regard which I cannot bring myself entirely to reciprocate in kind, and yet its withdrawal leaves a painful blank.

*Saturday Morning.*

I have got your note. I fear your journey home must have sadly fagged you, but I trust that in a day or two you will begin to feel the benefits of the change. What endless trouble that unlucky little Flossy gives you! how strange that in her trouble she should nestle into your portmanteau! little vermin!

Above you have all the account of ‘my visitor’; I dare not aver that your kind wish that the visit would yield me more pleasure than pain has been fulfilled—something at my heart aches and gnaws drearily, but I must cultivate fortitude. Papa, I am thankful to say, is a little better, though he improves but slowly; he and Mr. Taylor got on very well together, much better than the first time.

Write to me again *very soon*.—Yours faithfully,

C. B.

## Letter 502

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 9th, 1851.*

DEAR NELL,—Thank you for your kind note ; it was just like you to write it *though* it was your school-day. I never knew you to let a slight impediment stand in the way of a friendly action.

Certainly I shall not soon forget last Friday, and *never*, I think, the evening and night succeeding that morning and afternoon. Evils seldom come singly—and soon after Mr. Taylor was gone, papa, who had been better, grew much worse ; he went to bed early and was very sick and ill for an hour, and when at last he began to doze, and I left him, I came down to the dining-room with a sense of weight, fear, and desolation, hard to express and harder to endure. A wish that you were with me *did* cross my mind, but I repulsed it as a most selfish wish ; indeed it was only short-lived, my natural tendency in moments of this sort is to get through the struggle alone—to think that one is burdening and racking others makes all worse.

You speak to me in soft consoling accents, but I hold far sterner language to myself, dear Nell.

An absence of five years—a dividing expanse of three oceans—the wide difference between a man's active career and a woman's passive existence—these things are almost equivalent to an eternal separation. But there is another thing which forms a barrier more difficult to pass than any of these. Would Mr. Taylor and I ever suit ? Could I ever feel for him enough love to accept him as a husband ? Friendship—gratitude—esteem I have, but each moment he came near me, and that I could see his eyes fastened on me, my veins ran ice. Now that he is away I feel far more gently towards him, it is only close by that I grow rigid—stiffening with a strange mixture of apprehension and anger—which nothing softens but his retreat and a perfect subduing of his manner. I did not want to be proud, nor intend to be proud, but I was forced to be so.

Most true is it that we are overruled by one above us—that in His hands our very will is as clay in the hands of the potter.

Papa continues very far from well, though yesterday, and I

hope this morning, he is a little better. How is your mother? give my love to her and your sisters; how are you? Have you suffered from tic since you returned home—did they think you improved in looks?

Write again soon.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 503

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 12th, 1851.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am truly glad that the books I sent have been of use to your mother. It is not to be wondered at that her health should vary in this weather. I trust papa is not worse, but he too varies; he has never been down to breakfast but once since you left; the inflammatory action seems more about the stomach, and less in the throat and chest than last spring. I would fain believe this is better. The circumstance of having him to think about just now is good for me in one way, it keeps my thoughts off other matters which have become complete bitterness and ashes. I do assure you, dear Nell, a more entire crumbling away of a seeming foundation of support and prospect of hope than that which I allude to, can scarcely be realised. In my own mind, I am, I think, satisfied of that. We will say no more about it.

By the bye, I meant to ask you when you went to Leeds, to do a small errand for me, but fear your hands will be too full of business. It is merely this: in case you chanced to be in any shop where the lace cloaks, both black and white, of which I spoke, were sold, to ask their price. I suppose they would hardly like to send a few to Haworth to be looked at; indeed, if they cost very much, it would be useless, but if they are reasonable and they would send them, I should like to see them; and also some chemisettes of small size (the full woman's size does not fit me), both of simple style, for every day and for best.

Write, dear Ellen, whenever you have time. I am keeping up as well as ever I can, but I dare not say I am happy, or see before me any very happy prospect in the future, but I must remember thousands are worse off than I am.—Yours faithfully, C. B.



Letter 504

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 23rd, 1851.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—It appears I could not rest satisfied when I was well off. I told you I had taken one of the black lace mantles, but when I came to try it with the black satin dress, with which I should chiefly want to wear it, I found the effect was far from good; the beauty of the lace was lost, and it looked somewhat brown and rusty; I wrote to Mr. Stocks, requesting him to change it for a *white* mantle of the same price; he was extremely courteous, and sent to London for one, which I have got this morning. The price is less, being but £1, 14s.; it is pretty, neat and light, looks well on black; and upon reasoning the matter over, I came to the conclusion, that it would be no shame for a person of my means to wear a cheaper thing; so I think I shall take it, and if you ever see it and call it ‘trumpety’ so much the worse.

I have heard from Mr. Taylor to-day, a quiet little note; he returned to London a week since on Saturday, he has since kindly chosen and sent me a parcel of books. He leaves England May 20th; his note concludes with asking whether he has any chance of seeing me in London before that time. I must tell him that I have already fixed June for my visit, and therefore, in all human probability we shall see each other no more.

There is still a want of plain, mutual understanding in this business, and there is sadness and pain in more ways than one. My conscience, I can truly say, does not *now* accuse me of having treated Mr. Taylor with injustice or unkindness. What I once did wrong in this way, I have endeavoured to remedy both to himself and in speaking of him to others, Mr. Smith to wit, though I more than doubt whether that last opinion will ever reach him; I am sure he has estimable and sterling qualities, but with every disposition and with every wish, with every intention even, to look on him in the most favourable point of view at his last visit, it was impossible to me in my inward heart, to think of him as one that might one day be acceptable as a husband. It would sound harsh were I to tell even *you* of the estimate I felt compelled to form respecting him; dear Nell, I looked for something of the gentleman—something I mean of the *natural*

gentleman; you know I can dispense with acquired polish, and for looks, I know myself too well to think that I have any right to be exacting on that point. I could not find one gleam, I could not see one passing glimpse, of true good-breeding; it is hard to say, but it is true. In mind too; though clever, he is second-rate; thoroughly second-rate. One does not like to say these things, but one had better be honest. Were I to marry him, my heart would bleed in pain and humiliation; I could not, *could* not look up to him. No—if Mr. Taylor be the only husband fate offers to me, single I must always remain. But yet, at times I grieve for him, and perhaps it is superfluous, for I cannot think he will suffer much; a hard nature, occupation and change of scene will befriend him.

I am glad to hear that you have lost that horrid tic, and hope your cold is by this time well. Papa continues much better. —With kind regards to all, I am, dear Nell, your middle-aged friend,

C. BRONTË.

Write soon.

## Letter 505

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 5th, 1851.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I hope Mercy has got well off on her travels by this, and left you to a little repose; I hope the change may do good, and that it may please Providence to prolong it for the benefit of all parties. How has your mother borne the cold weather of last week? It made papa somewhat worse, but he is better now. Still I don't like to leave him, and have quite made up my mind to put off the visit to Mrs. Gaskell till my return from London, though that last will depend upon papa's health of course.

I have had a long kind letter from Miss Martineau lately. She says she is well and happy. Also, I have had a very long letter from Mr. Williams. He speaks with much respect of Mr. Taylor. I discover with some surprise, papa has taken a decided liking to Mr. Taylor. The marked kindness of his manner when he bid him good-bye, exhorting him to be 'true to himself, his country and his God,' and wishing him all good wishes, struck me with some astonishment. Whenever he has alluded to him since, it has been with significant eulogy. When I alluded that he was

no gentleman, he seemed out of patience with me for the objection. You say papa has penetration. On this subject I believe he has indeed. I have told him nothing, yet he seems to be *au fait* to the whole business. I could think at some moments his guesses go farther than mine. I believe he thinks a prospective union, deferred for five years, with such a decorous reliable personage, would be a very proper and advisable affair.

How has your tic been lately? I had one fiery night when this same dragon 'tic' held me for some hours with pestilent violence. It still comes at intervals with unabated fury; owing to this and broken sleep, I am looking singularly charming, one of my true London looks, starved out and worn down. Write soon, dear Nell.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

I enclose a letter of Mr. Morgan's to papa, written just after he had read *Shirley*. It is curious to see the latent feeling roused in the old gentleman. I was especially struck by his remark about the chapter entitled: 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death, etc.' He must have had a true sense of what he read, or he could not have made it.

## Letter 506

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

May 10th, 1851.

DEAR NELL,—Poor little Flossy! I have not yet screwed up nerve to tell papa about her fate, it seems to me so piteous. However, she had a happy life with a kind mistress, whatever her death has been. Little hapless plague! She had more goodness and patience shown her than she deserved, I fear. Joe Taylor is a noodle. Amelia draws very heavily on good-nature and forbearance, she must be looked upon in the light of a 'cross to take up.' Comfort, or pleasure even, I fear, peace and safety will never be had out of her; of ordeal and discipline she has given plenty, and will give yet more. I suppose that is her use—to test and try others like a fiery furnace.

Do you know that I was in Leeds on the very same day with you, last Wednesday? I had thought of telling you when I was going, and having your help and company in buying a bonnet, etc., but then I reflected this would merely be making a selfish use of you, so I determined to manage or mismanage the matter

alone. I went to Hunt and Hall's for the bonnet, and got one, which seemed grave and quiet there amongst all the splendours; but now it looks infinitely too gay with its pink lining. I saw some beautiful silks of pale sweet colours, but had not the spirit or the means to launch out at the rate of five shillings per yard, and went and bought a black silk at three shillings after all. I rather regret this, because papa says he would have lent me a sovereign if he had known. I believe, if you had been there, you would have forced me to get into debt. Write soon again.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 507

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 21st, 1851.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I really can no more come to Brookroyd before I can go to London than I can fly. I have quantities of sewing to do, as well as household matters to arrange before I leave, as they will clean, etc., in my absence. Besides, I am grievously oppressed with headache, which I trust to change of air for relieving; but meantime, as it proceeds from the stomach, it makes me very thin and grey; neither you nor anybody else could fatten me up, or put me into good condition for the visit; it is fated otherwise. No matter. Calm your passion; yet I am glad to see it. Such spirit seems to prove health. Good-bye; in haste,

C. BRONTË.

Your mother is like Tabby, Martha, and papa; all these fancy I am somehow, by some mysterious process, to be married in London, or to engage myself to matrimony. How I smile internally! How groundless and impossible is the idea! Papa seriously told me yesterday, that if I married and left him, he should give up house-keeping and go into lodgings!

## Letter 508

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 22nd, '51.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I hope you will have got Mercy home before this. How is she? I trust better bodily and mentally for her visit. I hope, too, that you and your mother are well. Papa's



state of health gives me much cause for thankfulness ; if he continues so well, I shall be able to leave him with comparatively little anxiety. For my own part, headaches and occasional sickness annoy me. I shall go to London with nothing to boast of in looks ; however careful I am in diet, my stomach will not keep right.

Next Thursday is the day now fixed for my going. I have heard again from Mr. Smith and his mother. I would send you the notes, only that I fear your comments ; you do not read them by my lights, and would see more in an impetuous expression of quite temporary satisfaction, than strict reality justifies.

Are the Hunsworth doves yet on the wing, or are they returned to the conjugal nest ? They have had fine weather part of the time. I hope Amelia will gain benefit from the excursion.

I am sure, Nell, you did not expect me to come to Brookroyd before I went to London. I know you will be busy enough with your Spring clean, etc., preparing for the Gorhams ; and how in the world am I to visit you during their stay ? When they are with you, I shall (D.V.) be in London. I hope we shall meet somewhere somehow, after your visitors are gone and my visit is over. Meanwhile, with regards to all. Good-bye.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 509

TO SYDNEY DOBELL

May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1851.

MY DEAR SIR,—I hasten to send Mrs. Dobell the autograph. It was the word 'Album' that frightened me : I thought she wished me to write a sonnet on purpose for it, which I could not do.

Your proposal respecting a journey to Switzerland is deeply kind ; it draws me with the force of a mighty Temptation, but the stern Impossible holds me back. No ! I cannot go to Switzerland this summer.

Why did the editor of the *Eclectic* erase that most powerful and pictorial passage ? He could not be insensible to its beauty ; perhaps he thought it profane. Poor man !<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The passage erased is contained in Sydney Dobell's letter to Charlotte Brontë

I know nothing of such an orchard country as you describe. I have never seen such a region. Our hills only confess the coming of summer by growing green with young fern and moss, in secret little hollows. Their bloom is reserved for autumn; then they burn with a kind of dark glow, different, doubtless, from the blush of garden blossoms. About the close of this month I expect to go to London, to pay a brief and quiet visit. I fear chance will not be so propitious as to bring you to town while I am there; otherwise how glad I should be if you would call! With kind regards to Mrs. Dobell, believe me sincerely  
yours,  
C. BRONTË.

published in *The Life and Letters of Sydney Dobell* (Smith, Elder and Co., 1878), from which the following extract is taken:—

‘In the proof from the *Eclectic*, which I have been correcting, a paragraph was struck out by the sapient editor. It was this:

“‘Yes, oh divine earth; oh incommunicable beauty, wearing thy crown of thorns, and having on the purple robe of immemorial sunsets, we have parted thy garments among us, and for thy vesture have we cast lots.” Poor citizen—he knew not it was written in Paradise.

‘One question and I must conclude. And briefly as I put it, I could write a chapter on nothing else. Is it possible that you can spare time and money to go to Switzerland this summer? E(mily) and I hope to go in a month’s time (it will not be an expensive journey—for that we authors and authoresses are not rich people, I need not tell Currer Bell; but we expect to see the noblest things in the land of marvels), and how glorious if you could accompany us!

‘If it is possible, come.’

## CHAPTER XXVI

## A MONTH IN LONDON

IN spite of low spirits and bad health, Miss Brontë clearly enjoyed her month in London during the opening excitements of our first great Exhibition. It was a thousand pities that she could not have adopted Mr. Dobell's suggestion in the last letter, and have gone to Switzerland, or even have visited the orchard country near Cheltenham where he lived. One thinks that experience of this kind—travel with congenial friends in a more genial climate than that of Haworth—might have made her a stronger woman and have prolonged her life. Who shall say? But clearly the call of duty—a desire to remain not too remote from her father—limited so unfortunately her knowledge of the most health-giving environments.

## Letter 510

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË

Nov. —, 1849.

DEAR PAPA,—I must write another line to you to tell you how I am getting on. I have seen a great many things since I left home about which I hope to talk to you at future tea-times at home. I have been to the theatre and seen Macready in *Macbeth* I have seen the pictures in the National Gallery. I have seen a beautiful exhibition of Turner's paintings, and yesterday I saw Mr. Thackeray. He dined here with some other gentlemen. He is a very tall man—above six feet high, with a peculiar face—not handsome, very ugly indeed, generally somewhat stern and satirical in expression, but capable also of a kind look. He was not told who I was, he was not introduced to me, but I soon saw him looking at me through his spectacles; and when we all rose to go down to dinner he just stepped quietly up and said, 'Shake hands'; so I shook hands. He spoke very few words to me, but

when he went away he shook hands again in a very kind way. It is better, I should think, to have him for a friend than an enemy, for he is a most formidable-looking personage. I listened to him as he conversed with the other gentlemen. All he says is most simple, but often cynical, harsh, and contradictory. I get on quietly. Most people know me, I think, but they are far too well bred to show that they know me, so that there is none of that bustle or that sense of publicity I dislike.

I hope you continue pretty well; be sure to take care of yourself. The weather here is exceedingly changeful, and often damp and misty, so that it is necessary to guard against taking cold. I do not mean to stay in London above a week longer, but I shall write again two or three days before I return. You need not give yourself the trouble of answering this letter unless you have something particular to say. Remember me to Tabby and Martha.—I remain, dear papa, your affectionate daughter, C. BRONTË.

### Letter 511

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË

76 GLOUCESTER TERRACE, HYDE PARK,  
LONDON, *Thursday Morning, May 29th, 1851.*

DEAR PAPA,—I write one hasty line just to tell you that I got here quite safely at ten o'clock last night without any damage or smash in tunnels or cuttings. Mr. and Mrs. Smith met me at the station and gave me a kind and cordial welcome. The weather was beautiful the whole way, and warm; it is the same to-day. I have not yet been out, but this afternoon, if all be well, I shall go to Mr. Thackeray's lecture. I don't know when I shall see the Exhibition, but when I do, I shall write and tell you all about it. I hope you are well, and will continue well and cheerful. Give my kind regards to Tabby and Martha, and—Believe me, your affectionate daughter, C. BRONTË.

### Letter 512

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË

76 GLOUCESTER TERRACE, HYDE PARK,  
LONDON, *May 30th, 1851.*

DEAR PAPA,—I have now heard one of Mr. Thackeray's lectures and seen the great Exhibition. On Thursday afternoon



I went to hear the lecture. It was delivered in a large and splendid kind of saloon—that in which the great balls of Almack's are given. The walls were all painted and gilded, the benches were sofas stuffed and cushioned and covered with blue damask. The audience was composed of the *élite* of London society. Duchesses were there by the score, and amongst them the great and beautiful Duchess of Sutherland, the Queen's Mistress of the Robes. Amidst all this Thackeray just got up and spoke with as much simplicity and ease as if he had been speaking to a few friends by his own fireside. The lecture was truly good: he has taken pains with the composition. It was finished without being in the least studied; a quiet humour and graphic force enlivened it throughout. He saw me as I entered the room, and came straight up and spoke very kindly. He then took me to his mother, a fine, handsome old lady, and introduced me to her. After the lecture somebody came behind me, leaned over the bench, and said, 'Will you permit me, as a Yorkshireman, to introduce myself to you?' I turned round, was puzzled at first by the strange face I met, but in a minute I recognised the features. 'You are the Earl of Carlisle,' I said. He smiled and assented. He went on to talk for some time in a courteous, kind fashion. He asked after you, recalled the platform electioneering scene at Haworth, and begged to be remembered to you. Dr. Forbes came up afterwards, and Mr. Monckton Milnes, a Yorkshire Member of Parliament, who introduced himself on the same plea as Lord Carlisle.

Yesterday we went to the Crystal Palace.<sup>1</sup> The exterior has a strange and elegant but somewhat unsubstantial effect. The interior is like a mighty Vanity Fair. The brightest colours blaze on all sides; and ware of all kinds, from diamonds to spinning jennies and printing presses, are there to be seen. It was very fine, gorgeous, animated, bewildering, but I liked Thackeray's lecture better.

I hope, dear papa, that you are keeping well. With kind regards to Tabby and Martha, and hopes that they are well too,—I am, your affectionate daughter,

C. BRONTË.

<sup>1</sup> The Great Exhibition in Hyde Park.

## Letter 513

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

112 GLOUCESTER TERRACE, HYDE PARK,  
*June 2nd, 1851.*

DEAR NELL,—I came here on Wednesday, being summoned a day sooner than I expected, in order to be in time for Thackeray's second lecture, which was delivered on Thursday afternoon. This, as you may suppose, was a genuine treat to me, and I was glad not to miss it. It was given in Willis' Rooms, where the Almack's balls are held, a great painted and gilded saloon with long sofas for benches. The audience was said to be the cream of London society, and it looked so. I did not at all expect the great lecturer would know me or notice me under the circumstances, with admiring duchesses and countesses seated in rows before him; but he met me as I entered, shook hands, took me to his mother, whom I had not before seen, and introduced me. She is a fine, handsome, young-looking, old lady; she was very gracious, and called with one of her granddaughters next day.

Thackeray called too, separately. I had a long talk with him, and I think he knows me now a little better than he did; but of this I cannot yet be sure; he is a great and strange man. There is quite a furor for his lectures. They are a sort of essays, characterised by his own peculiar originality and power, and delivered with a finished taste and ease, which is felt, but cannot well be described. Just before the lecture began, somebody came behind me, leaned over and said, 'Permit me, a Yorkshireman, to introduce myself.' I turned round, saw a strange, not handsome, face, which puzzled me for half a minute, and then I said, 'You are Lord Carlisle.' He nodded and smiled; he talked a few minutes very pleasantly and courteously.

Afterwards came another man with the same plea, that he was a Yorkshireman, and this turned out to be Mr. Monckton Milnes. Then came Dr. Forbes, whom I was sincerely glad to see. On Friday I went to the Crystal Palace; it is a marvellous, stirring, bewildering sight, a mixture of genii palace and a mighty bazaar, but it is not much in my way; I liked the lecture better. On Saturday I saw the Exhibition at Somerset House; about half a dozen of the pictures are good and interesting, the rest of little worth. Sunday, yesterday, was a day to be marked with a white

stone: through most of the day I was very happy, without being tired or over-excited. In the afternoon I went to hear D'Aubigné, the great Protestant French preacher; it was pleasant—half sweet, half sad—and strangely suggestive, to hear the French language once more. For health, I have so far got on very fairly, considering that I came here far from well. Of Mr. Williams' society I have enjoyed one evening's allowance, and liked it and him as usual. On such occasions his good qualities of ease, kindness, and intelligence are seen and his little faults and foibles hidden. Mr. Smith is somewhat changed in appearance; he looks a little older, darker and more careworn, his ordinary manner is graver, but in the evening his spirits flow back to him. Things and circumstances seem here to be as usual, but I fancy there has been some crisis in which his energy and filial affection have sustained them all; this I judge from the fact that mother and sisters are more peculiarly bound to him than ever and that his slightest wish is an unquestioned law.

Your visitors will soon be with you, if they are not at Brookroyd already. I trust their sojourn will pass as you could wish, and bring you all pleasure. Remember me to all, especially your mother. Write soon, and believe me, faithfully yours,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 514

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË

112 GLOUCESTER TERRACE,  
HYDE PARK, *June 7th*, 1851.

DEAR PAPA,—I was very glad to hear that you continued in pretty good health, and that Mr. Cartman came to help you on Sunday. I fear you will not have had a very comfortable week in the dining-room; but by this time I suppose the parlour reformation will be nearly completed, and you will soon be able to return to your old quarters. The letter you sent me this morning was from Mary Taylor. She continues well and happy in New Zealand, and her shop seems to answer well. The French newspaper duly arrived. Yesterday I went for the second time to the Crystal Palace. We remained in it about three hours, and I must say I was more struck with it on this occasion than at my first visit. It is a wonderful place—vast,

strange, new, and impossible to describe. Its grandeur does not consist in *one* thing, but in the unique assemblage of *all* things. Whatever human industry has created, you find there, from the great compartments filled with railway engines and boilers, with mill-machinery in full work, with splendid carriages of all kinds, with harness of every description—to the glass-covered and velvet-spread stands loaded with the most gorgeous work of the goldsmith and silversmith, and the carefully guarded caskets full of real diamonds and pearls worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. It may be called a bazaar or a fair, but it is such a bazaar or fair as Eastern genii might have created. It seems as if magic only could have gathered this mass of wealth from all the ends of the earth—as if none but supernatural hands could have arranged it thus, with such a blaze and contrast of colours and marvellous power of effect. The multitude filling the great aisles seems ruled and subdued by some invisible influence. Amongst the thirty thousand souls that peopled it the day I was there, not one loud noise was to be heard, not one irregular movement seen—the living tide rolls on quietly, with a deep hum like the sea heard from the distance.

Mr. Thackeray is in high spirits about the success of his lectures. It is likely to add largely both to his fame and purse. He has, however, deferred this week's lecture till next Thursday, at the earnest petition of the duchesses and marchionesses, who, on the day it should have been delivered, were necessitated to go down with the Queen and Court to Ascot Races. I told him I thought he did wrong to put it off on their account—and I think so still. The amateur performance of Bulwer's play for the Guild of Literature has likewise been deferred on account of the races. I hope, dear papa, that you, Mr. Nicholls, and all at home continue well. Tell Martha to take her scrubbing and cleaning in moderation and not overwork herself. With kind regards to her and Tabby,—I am, your affectionate daughter,

C. BRONTË.

Mrs. Gaskell's account of this Thackeray lecture is very interesting :—

The lady who accompanied Miss Brontë to the lecture of Thackeray's alluded to says that, soon after they had taken their places, she was aware that he was pointing out her companion to



several of his friends, but she hoped that Miss Brontë herself would not perceive it. After some time, however, during which many heads had been turned round, and many glasses put up, in order to look at the author of *Jane Eyre*, Miss Brontë said, 'I am afraid Mr. Thackeray has been playing me a trick'; but she soon became too much absorbed in the lecture to notice the attention which was being paid to her, except when it was directly offered, as in the case of Lord Carlisle and Mr. Monckton Milnes. When the lecture was ended Mr. Thackeray came down from the platform, and making his way towards her asked her for her opinion. This she mentioned to me not many days afterwards, adding remarks almost identical with those which I subsequently read in *Villette*, where a similar action on the part of M. Paul Emanuel is related.

As they were preparing to leave the room her companion saw with dismay that many of the audience were forming themselves into two lines, on each side of the aisle down which they had to pass before reaching the door. Aware that any delay would only make the ordeal more trying, her friend took Miss Brontë's arm in hers, and they went along the avenue of eager and admiring faces. During this passage through the 'cream of society' Miss Brontë's hand trembled to such a degree that her companion feared lest she should turn faint and be unable to proceed; and she dared not express her sympathy or try to give her strength by any touch or word, lest it might bring on the crisis she dreaded.

## Letter 515

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

112 GLOUCESTER TERRACE, HYDE PARK,  
*June 11th, 1851.*

DEAR NELL,—I sit down to write you this morning in an inexpressibly flat state; having spent the whole of yesterday and the day before in a gradually increasing headache, which at last grew rampant and violent, ended with excessive sickness, and this morning I am quite weak and washy. I hoped to leave my headaches behind me at Haworth; but it seems I brought them carefully packed in my trunk, and very much have they been in my way since I came. I fear you are not well. If all be well I shall leave London at the close of next week.

To come and see you while you have visitors would, I am sure, be a complete waste of time and throwing away of opportunity, therefore I *won't do it*; so that is settled. You seem to think me in such a happy, enviable position; pleasant moments I have, but it is usually a pleasure I am obliged to repel and check, which cannot benefit the future, but only add to its solitude, which is no more to be relied on than the sunshine of one summer's day. I pass portions of many a night in extreme sadness.

Since I wrote last, I have seen various things worth describing; Rachel, the great French actress, amongst the number. But to-day I really have no pith for the task. I can only wish you good-bye with all my heart.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Write when you have time.

## Letter 516

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË

112 GLOUCESTER TERRACE, HYDE PARK,

*June 14th, 1851.*

DEAR PAPA,—If all be well, and if Martha can get the cleaning, etc., done by that time, I think I shall be coming home about the end of next week or the beginning of the week after. I have been pretty well in London, only somewhat troubled with headaches, owing, I suppose, to the closeness and oppression of the air. The weather has not been so favourable as when I was last here, and in wet and dark days this great Babylon is not so cheerful. All the other sights seem to give way to the great Exhibition, into which thousands and tens of thousands continue to pour every day. I was in it again yesterday afternoon, and saw the ex-royal family of France—the old Queen, the Duchess of Orleans, and her two sons, etc., pass down the transept. I almost wonder the Londoners don't tire a little of this vast Vanity Fair—and, indeed, a new toy has somewhat diverted the attention of the grandees lately, viz. a fancy ball given last night by the Queen. The great lords and ladies have been quite wrapt up in preparations for this momentous event. Their pet and darling, Mr. Thackeray, of course sympathises with them. He was here yesterday to dinner, and left very early in the evening in order that he might visit respectively the Duchess of Norfolk, the Marchioness of Londonderry, Ladies Chesterfield and Clanricarde, and see them all in

their fancy costumes of the reign of Charles II. before they set out for the Palace! His lectures, it appears, are a triumphant success. He says they will enable him to make a provision for his daughters; and Mr. Smith believes he will not get less than four thousand pounds by them. He is going to give two courses, and then go to Edinburgh and perhaps America, but *not* under the auspices of Barnum. Amongst others, the Lord Chancellor attended his last lecture, and Mr. Thackeray says he expects a place from him; but in this I think he was joking. Of course Mr. T. is a good deal spoiled by all this, and indeed it cannot be otherwise. He has offered two or three times to introduce me to some of his great friends, and says he knows many great ladies who would receive me with open arms if I would go to their houses; but, seriously, I cannot see that this sort of society produces so good an effect on him as to tempt me in the least to try the same experiment, so I remain obscure.

Hoping you are well, dear papa, and with kind regards to Mr. Nicholls, Tabby, and Martha, also poor old Keeper and Flossie,—  
I am, your affectionate daughter, C. BRONTË,

*P.S.*—I am glad the parlour is done and that you have got safely settled, but am quite shocked to hear of the piano being dragged up into the bedroom—there it must necessarily be absurd, and in the parlour it looked so well, besides being convenient for your books. I wonder why you don't like it.

## Letter 517

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË

112 GLOUCESTER TERRACE, HYDE PARK,  
LONDON, *June 17th*, 1851.

DEAR PAPA,—I write a line in haste to tell you that I find they will not let me leave London till next Tuesday; and as I have promised to spend a day or two with Mrs. Gaskell on my way home, it will probably be Friday or Saturday in next week before I return to Haworth. Martha will thus have a few days more time, and must not hurry or overwork herself. Yesterday I saw Cardinal Wiseman and heard him speak. It was at a meeting for the Roman Catholic Society of St. Vincent de Paul; the Cardinal presided. He is a big portly man something of the shape of Mr. Morgan; he has not merely a double but a treble and quadruple

chin ; he has a very large mouth with oily lips, and looks as if he would relish a good dinner with a bottle of wine after it. He came swimming into the room smiling, simpering, and bowing like a fat old lady, and sat down very demure in his chair, and looked the picture of a sleek hypocrite. He was dressed in black like a bishop or dean in plain clothes, but wore scarlet gloves and a brilliant scarlet waistcoat. A bevy of inferior priests surrounded him, many of them very dark-looking and sinister men. The Cardinal spoke in a smooth whining manner, just like a canting Methodist preacher. The audience seemed to look up to him as to a god. A spirit of the hottest zeal pervaded the whole meeting. I was told afterwards that except myself and the person who accompanied me there was not a single Protestant present. All the speeches turned on the necessity of straining every nerve to make converts to popery. It is in such a scene that one feels what the Catholics are doing. Most persevering and enthusiastic are they in their work ! Let Protestants look to it. It cheered me much to hear that you continue pretty well. Take every care of yourself. Remember me kindly to Tabby and Martha, also to Mr. Nicholls, and—Believe me, dear papa, your affectionate daughter,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 518

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*June 19th, 1851.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I shall have to stay in London a few days longer than I intended. Sir J. K. Shuttleworth has found out that I am here ; I have some trouble in warding off his wish that I should go directly to his house and take up my quarters there, but Mrs. Smith helped me, and I got off with promising to spend a day. I am engaged to spend a day or two with Mrs. Gaskell on my way home, and could not put her off, as she is going away for a portion of the summer. Lady Shuttleworth looks very delicate. Papa is now very desirous I should come home, and when I have as quickly as possible paid my debts of engagements, home I must go. Next Tuesday I go to Manchester for two days.

I cannot boast that London has agreed with me well this time ; the oppression of frequent headache, sickness, and a low tone of spirits, has poisoned many moments which might otherwise have been pleasant. Sometimes I have felt this hard, and been tempted



to murmur at Fate, which compels me to comparative silence and solitude for eleven months in the year, and in the twelfth, while offering social enjoyment, takes away the vigour and cheerfulness which should turn it to account. But circumstances are ordered for us, and we must submit. I still hope to see you ere long. Wishing you and your guests all happiness and pleasure, I am,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 519

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

112 GLOUCESTER TERRACE,  
*June 24th, 1851.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Your letter would have been answered yesterday, but I was already gone out before post time, and was out all day. Since Sir J. K. Shuttleworth discovered that I was in London I have had precious little time to myself. He brings other people who are very kind, and perhaps I shall be glad of what I have seen afterwards, but it is often a little trying at the time. On Thursday the Marquis of Westminster asked me to a great party, to which I was to go with Mrs. Davenport, a beautiful, and, I think, a kind woman too; but this I resolutely declined. On Friday I dined at the Shuttleworth's, and met Mrs. Davenport and Mr. Monckton Milnes. On Saturday I went to hear and see Rachel; a wonderful sight, terrible as if the earth had cracked deep at your feet, and revealed a glimpse of hell. I shall never forget it. She made me shudder to the marrow of my bones; in her some fiend has certainly taken up an incarnate home. She is not a woman; she is a snake; she is the ——. On Sunday I went to the Spanish Ambassador's Chapel, where Cardinal Wiseman, in his archiepiscopal robes and mitre, held a confirmation. The whole scene was impiously theatrical. Yesterday (Monday) I was sent for at ten to breakfast with Mr. Rogers, the patriarch-poet. Mrs. Davenport and Lord Glenelg were there; no one else: this certainly proved a most calm, refined, and intellectual treat. After breakfast Sir David Brewster came to take us to the Crystal Palace. I had rather dreaded this, for Sir David is a man of profoundest science, and I feared it would be impossible to understand his explanations of the mechanism, etc.; indeed, I hardly knew how to ask him questions. I was spared all trouble: without being questioned, he gave information in the kindest and simplest

manner. After two hours spent at the Exhibition, and when, as you may suppose, I was *very* tired, we had to go to Lord Westminster's, and spend two hours more in looking at the collection of pictures in his splendid gallery. I cannot now leave London till Friday. To-morrow is Mr. Smith's only holiday. Mr. Taylor's departure leaves him loaded with work. More than once since I came he has been kept in the city till three in the morning. He wants to take us all to Richmond, and I promised last week I would stay and go with him, his mother, and sisters. I go to Mrs. Gaskell's on Friday. Believe me, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 520

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË, HAWORTH, YORKS

112 GLOUCESTER TERRACE,

*June 26th, 1851.*

DEAR PAPA,—I have not yet been able to get away from London, but if all be well I shall go to-morrow, stay two days with Mrs. Gaskell at Manchester, and return home on Monday 30th *without fail*. During this last week or ten days I have seen many things, some of them very interesting, and have also been in much better health than I was during the first fortnight of my stay in London. Sir James and Lady Shuttleworth have really been very kind, and most scrupulously attentive. They desire their regards to you, and send all manner of civil messages. The Marquis of Westminster and the Earl of Ellesmere each sent me an order to see their private collection of pictures, which I enjoyed very much. Mr. Rogers, the patriarch-poet, now eighty-seven years old, invited me to breakfast with him. His breakfasts, you must understand, are celebrated throughout Europe for their peculiar refinement and taste. He never admits at that meal more than four persons to his table: himself and three guests. The morning I was there I met Lord Glenelg and Mrs. Davenport, a relation of Lady Shuttleworth's, and a very beautiful and fashionable woman. The visit was very interesting; I was glad that I had paid it after it was over. An attention that pleased and surprised me more I think than any other was the circumstance of Sir David Brewster, who is one of the first scientific men of his day, coming to take me over the Crystal Palace, and pointing out and explaining the most remarkable curiosities. You will

know, dear papa, that I do not mention those things to boast of them, but merely because I think they will give you pleasure. Nobody, I find, thinks the worse of me for avoiding publicity and declining to go to large parties, and everybody seems truly courteous and respectful, a mode of behaviour which makes me grateful, as it ought to do. Good-bye till Monday. Give my best regards to Mr. Nicholls, Tabby, and Martha, and—Believe me your affectionate daughter,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 521

TO MRS. SMITH

HAWORTH, *July 1st*, 1851.

MY DEAR MRS. SMITH,—Once more I am at home, where, I am thankful to say, I found my father very well. The journey to Manchester was a little hot and dusty, but otherwise pleasant enough. The two stout gentlemen who filled a portion of the carriage when I got in quitted it at Rugby, and two other ladies and myself had it to ourselves the rest of the way. The visit to Mrs. Gaskell formed a cheering break in the journey. Haworth Parsonage is rather a contrast; yet even Haworth Parsonage does not look gloomy in this bright summer weather; it is somewhat still, but with the windows open I can hear a bird or two singing on certain thorn trees in the garden. My father and the servants think me looking better than when I left home, and I certainly feel better myself for the change. You are too much like your son to render it advisable I should say much about your kindness during my visit. However, one cannot help (like Captain Cuttle) making a note of these matters. Papa says I am to thank you in his name, and offer you his respects, which I do accordingly.—With truest regards to all your circle, believe me very sincerely yours,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 522

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *July 14th*, 1851.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—My first feeling on receiving your note was one of disappointment; but a little consideration sufficed to show me that ‘all was for the best.’ In truth, it was a great piece of extravagance on my part to ask you and Ellen together;

it is much better to divide such good things. To have your visit in *prospect* will console me when hers is in *retrospect*. Not that I mean to yield to the weakness of clinging dependently to the society of friends, however dear, but still, as an occasional treat, I must value and even seek such society as a necessary of life. Let me know, then, whenever it suits your convenience to come to Haworth, and, unless some change I cannot now foresee occurs, a ready and warm welcome will await you. Should there be any cause rendering it desirable to defer the visit, I will tell you frankly.

The pleasures of society I cannot offer you, nor those of fine scenery, but I place very much at your command the moors, some books, a series of 'curling-hair times,' and an old pupil into the bargain. Ellen may have told you that I have spent a month in London this summer. When you come you shall ask what questions you like on that point, and I will answer to the best of my stammering ability. Do not press me much on the subject of the 'Crystal Palace.' I went there five times, and certainly saw some interesting things, and the *coup d'œil* is striking and bewildering enough, but I never was able to get up any raptures on the subject, and each renewed visit was made under coercion rather than my own free-will. It is an excessively bustling place; and, after all, its wonders appeal too exclusively to the eye, and rarely touch the heart or head. I make an exception to the last assertion in favour of those who possess a large range of scientific knowledge. Once I went with Sir David Brewster, and perceived that he looked on objects with other eyes than mine.

Ellen I find is writing, and will therefore deliver her own messages of regard. If papa were in the room he would, I know, desire his respects; and you must take both respects and a good bundle of something more cordial from yours very faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 523

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

July 21st, 1851.

MY DEAR SIR,—I delayed answering your very interesting letter until the box should have reached me; and now that it is come I can only acknowledge its arrival: I cannot say at all what I felt as I unpacked its contents. These Cornhill parcels have something of the magic charm of a fairy gift about them, as well



as of the less poetical but more substantial pleasure of a box from home received at school. You have sent me this time even more books than usual, and all good. What shall I say about the twenty numbers of splendid engravings laid cosily at the bottom? The whole Vernon Gallery brought to one's fireside! Indeed, indeed I can say nothing, except that I will take care, and keep them clean, and send them back uninjured. In reading your graphic account of a visit to Oxford after an interval of thirty years since you last went there—and of the disillusion which meanwhile had taken place—I could not help wondering whether Cornhill will ever change for me as Oxford has changed for you; I have some pleasant associations connected with it now—will these alter their character some day? Perhaps they may—though I have faith to the contrary; because—I think—I do not exaggerate my partialities; I *think* I take faults along with excellences—blemishes together with beauties. And besides—in the matter of friendship—I have observed that disappointment here arises chiefly, *not* from liking our friends too well, or thinking of them too highly, but rather from an overestimate of *their* liking for and opinion of *us*; and that if we guard ourselves with sufficient scrupulousness of care from error in this direction—and can be content, and even happy to give more affection than we receive—can make just comparison of circumstances and be severely accurate in drawing inferences thence, and never let self-love blind our eyes—I *think* we may manage to get through life with constancy—unembittered by that misanthropy which springs from revulsions of feeling. All this sounds a little metaphysical—but it is good sense if you consider it. The moral of it is, that if we would build on a sure foundation in friendship, we must love our friends for *their* sakes rather than for *our own*, we must look at their truth to *themselves* fully as much as their truth to *us*. In the latter case, every wound to self-love would be a cause of coldness; in the former, only some painful change in the friend's character and disposition—some fearful breach in his allegiance to his better self—could alienate the heart.

How interesting your old maiden cousin's gossip about your parents must have been to you; and how gratifying to find that the reminiscence turned on none but pleasant facts and characteristics! Life must, indeed be slow in that little decaying hamlet amongst the chalk hills. After all, depend upon it, it is

better to be worn out with work in a thronged community than to perish of inaction in a stagnant solitude: take this truth into consideration whenever you get tired of work and bustle.—  
Believe me, yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 524

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *July 27th*, 1851.

DEAR NELL,—I hope you have taken no cold from your wretched journey home; you see you should have taken my advice and stayed till Saturday. Didn't I tell you I had a 'presentiment' it would be better for you to do so?

I am glad you found your mother pretty well. Is she disposed to excuse the wretched petrified condition of the bilberry preserve, in consideration of the intent of the donor? It seems they had high company while you were away. You see what you lose by coming to Haworth. No events here since your departure except a long letter from Miss Martineau. (She did not write the article on 'Woman' in the *Westminster*, by the way, it is the production of a man, and one of the first philosophers, and political economists and metaphysicians of the day.) Item, the departure of Mr. Nicholls for Ireland, and his inviting himself on the eve thereof to come and take a farewell tea; good, mild, uncontentious. Item, a note from the stiff little chap who called about the epitaph for his cousin. I enclose this; a finer gem in its way it would be difficult to conceive. You need not however be at the trouble of returning it. How are they at Hunsworth yet? It is no use saying whether I am solitary or not; I drive on very well, and papa continues pretty well.—Yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 525

TO MRS. GASKELL

HAWORTH, *August 6th*, 1851.

MY DEAR MRS. GASKELL,—I was too much pleased with your letter, when I got it at last, to feel disposed to murmur now about the delay.

About a fortnight ago I received a letter from Miss Martineau: a long letter, and treating precisely the same subjects on which

yours dwelt, viz. the Exhibition and Thackeray's last lecture. It was interesting mentally to place the two documents side by side—to study the two aspects of mind—to view alternately the same scene through two mediums. Full striking was the difference; and the more striking because it was not the rough contrast of good and evil, but the more subtle opposition, the more delicate diversity of different kinds of good. The excellences of one nature resembled (I thought) that of some sovereign medicine—harsh, perhaps, to the taste, but potent to invigorate; the good of the other seemed more akin to the nourishing efficacy of our daily bread. It is not bitter; it is not lusciously sweet; it pleases without flattering the palate; it sustains without forcing the strength.

I very much agree with you in all you say. For the sake of variety I could almost wish that the concord of opinion were less complete.

To begin with Trafalgar Square. My taste goes with yours and Meta's completely on this point. I have always thought it a fine site (and *sight* also). The view from the summit of those steps has ever struck me as grand and imposing—Nelson Column included: the fountains I could dispense with. With respect, also, to the Crystal Palace, my thoughts are precisely yours.

Then I feel sure you speak justly of Thackeray's lecture. You do well to set aside odious comparisons, and to wax impatient of that trite twaddle about 'nothing-newness'—a jargon which simply proves, in those who habitually use it, a coarse and feeble faculty of appreciation; an inability to discern the relative value of *originality* and *novelty*; a lack of that refined perception which, dispensing with the stimulus of an ever new subject, can derive sufficiency of pleasure from freshness of treatment. To such critics the prime of a summer morning would bring no delight; wholly occupied with railing at their cook for not having provided a novel and piquant breakfast dish, they would remain insensible to such influences as lie in sunrise, dew, and breeze: therein would be 'nothing new.'

Is it Mr. —'s family experience which has influenced your feelings about the Catholics? I own I cannot be sorry for this commencing change. Good people—*very* good people—I doubt not, there are amongst the Romanists, but the system is not one which should have such sympathy as *yours*. Look at Popery taking off the mask in Naples!

I have read *The Saint's Tragedy*.<sup>1</sup> As a 'work of art' it seems to me far superior to either *Alton Locke* or *Yeast*. Faulty it may be, crude and unequal, yet there are portions where some of the deep chords of human nature are swept with a hand which is strong even while it falters. We see throughout (I *think*) that Elizabeth has not, and never had, a mind perfectly sane. From the time that she was what she herself, in the exaggeration of her humility, calls 'an idiot girl,' to the hour when she lay moaning in visions on her dying bed, a slight craze runs through her whole existence. This is good: this is true. A sound mind, a healthy intellect, would have dashed the priest power to the wall; would have defended her natural affections from his grasp, as a lioness defends her young; would have been as true to husband and children as your leal-hearted little Maggie was to her Frank. Only a mind weak with some fatal flaw *could* have been influenced as was this poor saint's. But what anguish—what struggles! Seldom do I cry over books, but here my eyes rained as I read. When Elizabeth turns her face to the wall—I stopped—there needed no more.

Deep truths are touched on in this tragedy—touched on, not fully elicited—truths that stir a peculiar pity, a compassion hot with wrath and bitter with pain. This is no poet's dream: we know that such things *have* been done; that minds *have* been thus subjected, and lives thus laid waste.

Remember me kindly and respectfully to Mr. Gaskell, and though I have not seen Marianne I must beg to include her in the love I send the others. Could you manage to convey a small kiss to that dear but dangerous little person Julia? She surreptitiously possessed herself of a minute fraction of my heart, which has been missing ever since I saw her. Believe me sincerely and affectionately yours,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 526

TO MRS. GASKELL

[*Undated.*]

Whenever I see Florence and Julia again I shall feel like a fond but bashful suitor, who views at a distance the fair personage to whom, in his clownish awe, he dare not risk a near approach.

<sup>1</sup> *The Saint's Tragedy; or, the True Story of Elizabeth of Hungary*, by Charles Kingsley, was published in 1848.



Such is the clearest idea I can give you of my feeling towards children I like, but to whom I am a stranger. And to what children am I not a stranger? They seem to me little wonders; their talk, their ways are all matter of half-admiring, half-puzzled speculation.

## Letter 527

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*August 18th, 1851*

DEAR ELLEN,—I write a line to you because you will be expecting me to answer your last, not because I have anything worth hearing to say. You will wonder about the papers not coming as usual last week. I never got the *Leader* at all. As to the *Examiner*, papa took a fancy to keep a long leading article about the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, and also another on some other subject; accordingly he cut them out, and it was not worth while to send the paper thus mutilated. The French paper I despatch to-day.

Your account of Mr. Harding possesses a certain interest from one's having often heard his name before. He seems to have impressed you rather favourably than otherwise. Joe Taylor describes him as an enthusiastic man, but so coloured and turned his description as to give one the idea of a sort of spurious enthusiasm; something flighty and skin deep. This is a low quality; as low as the genuine fire is lofty; that genuine fire is however so rare, I can scarcely believe in Mr. Harding's possessing it. His Scotch physiognomy is however something in his favour, if Scotch it be. I hope your mother and all at Brookroyd continue pretty well, as papa, I am thankful to say, does. Tell me what you think of Georgiana after you have paid your visit.

I have been very well ever since you were here and am really fatter now, though I don't know how long it will last. Papa continues as usual, but he frequently complains of weakness, and needs often renewed encouragement. It is now getting dark  
—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 528

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*September 1st, 1851.*

DEAR NELL,—I have mislaid your last letter, so cannot look it over to see what there is in it to answer, but it is time it was

answered in some fashion whether I have anything to say or not. Miss C. Wooler's note is very like her. Mrs. Joe Taylor wrote to me a week or a fortnight since, a well-meaning, amiable little note. Mr. Morgan was here last Monday; fat, well, and hearty,—he came to breakfast by nine o'clock; he brought me a lot of tracts as a present.

It is useless to tell you how I live,—I endure life, but whether I enjoy it or not is another question. However, I get on. The weather, I think, has not been good lately or else the beneficial effects of change of air and scene are evaporating in spite of regular exercise. The old headaches, and starting wakeful nights are coming upon me again. But I *do* get on, and have neither wish nor right to complain.

Georgiana would be the better for going out for a year as maid-of-all-work, or plain cook in a respectable family.

Papa, it cheers me to say, has continued pretty well during the time of Mr. Nicholls' absence. I hope your mother is well, and Mary 'blooming' as Amelia says, and buxom. Also Mr. and Mrs. Clapham.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 529

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*September 10th, 1851.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I was indulging the hope that as you had not written again your mother was better; even after what you say, the impression left on my mind is that you are not to lose her yet. I think her constitutional tenacity of life will bear her through this attack, and perhaps others yet to come. We cannot be sure of this, but it is my strong persuasion; it is no doubt the turn of the year which is now trying her, and perhaps something more. The weather here has of late been peculiar; changing rapidly from hot to cold, its effects have been much felt by the old and weakly. Papa so far has borne it well. To-day is very beautiful. I trust it will favour your mother's improvement. One of the worst results of her illness may be that you will overfatigue yourself, and it is difficult to give advice on this point; you can but act for the best, and get fresh air and repose when it is in your power. I hope you will very soon write me a line however brief.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 530

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *September 13th, '51.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I have no intention of going from home during the next three weeks, but I wish you would just make up your mind to come to Haworth *now*. Miss S—— might come too if you thought proper; and if it would be any pleasure to her, I should be glad to see her. At present the weather is fine; when it once breaks, it may be long before it settles again, and you would find the place too dull in wet weather. *Do come on Tuesday afternoon*, you and Miss S——.

Write a little note to me on Monday to say you will come, and I will have your room duly aired and all ready.—Sincerely and affectionately yours,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 531

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*September 17th, 1851.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I well know what you are now going through, and very sincerely in my heart do I feel with and for you, and very earnestly do I trust that the strength and patience you have so far manifested may be continued through the heavier trial which seems near. It appears to me, as to you, that those symptoms must be the precursors of dissolution. I fancy your brother will find his mother a little worse than in his cold-blooded tranquillity he seems to anticipate. Excuse the epithet 'cold-blooded'—it is richly deserved. Love him, however, as well as you can—make what allowance you can—he is your brother. Let him be brought face to face with Death as according to probabilities he seems likely to be; it will bring him a little to his senses.

I shall write no more. You need no advice. May God sustain you.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 532

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*Saturday, September 20th, 1851.*

DEAR ELLEN,—That scene you describe was truly trying and bitter, but accept it as an inevitable thing. These poor people acted, I believe, partly in dense ignorance as well as in pride.

They cannot help being very vulgar in their mode of showing their feelings. Endure, pity, forgive as well as you can. But the 'unkindest cut' of all, and certainly the strangest, was your brother's conduct, yet it hardly surprised me. Illness sometimes makes an inexplicable rack of the mind, and unaccountably perverts the feelings. A seeming unkindness and ingratitude in beings tenderly loved and cherished and waited on in their sufferings with devoted patience is, I incline to believe, a species of torture oftener experienced than confessed; cruel is the anguish it strikes through the heart. I can only account for it by supposing that the soul is sick as well as the body. One knows not what the poor sufferers control and refuse in the way of peevish and unjust impulses. Alas! a sick-bed has heart-rending accompaniments. Courage, my dear Ellen. I can only wish you, in addition, comfort and peace. That your health will more or less suffer for all this must be expected.

Richard and Eliza will have their overcast days sometime, and perhaps they will then see their present conduct in a different light to what they do now.—Believe me, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Continue, dear Nell, to be as patient as you possibly can with ——. They are objects of pity. I could break out in strong language, but resist.

## Letter 533

TO MRS. GASKELL

*September 20th, 1851.*

... Beautiful are those sentences out of James Martineau's sermons; some of them gems most pure and genuine; ideas deeply conceived, finely expressed. I should like much to see his review of his sister's book. Of all the articles respecting which you question me I have seen none, except that notable one in the *Westminster* on the Emancipation of Women. But why are you and I to think (perhaps I should rather say to *feel*) so exactly alike on some points that there can be no discussion between us? Your words on this paper express my thoughts. Well argued it is—clear, logical—but vast is the hiatus of omission; harsh the consequent jar on every finer chord of the soul. What is this hiatus? I think I know; and knowing, I will venture to say. I think the writer forgets there is such a thing as self-sacrificing love and



disinterested devotion. . . . I believe J. S. Mill would make a hard, dry, dismal world of it ; and yet he speaks admirable sense through a great portion of his article, especially when he says that if there be a natural unfitness in women for men's employment there is no need to make laws on the subject ; leave all careers open ; let them try ; those who ought to succeed will succeed, or, at least, will have a fair chance ; the incapable will fall back into their right place. He likewise disposes of the 'maternity' question very neatly. . . . You are right when you say that there is a large margin in human nature over which the logicians have no dominion ; glad am I that it is so.

I send by this post Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, and I hope you and Meta will find passages in it that will please you. Some parts would be dry and technical were it not for the character, the marked individuality, which pervades every page. I wish Marianne had come to speak to me at the lecture ; it would have given me such pleasure. What you say of that small sprite Julia amuses me very much. I believe you don't know that she has a great deal of her mamma's nature (modified) in her, yet I think you will find she has as she grows up.

Will it not be a great mistake if Mr. Thackeray should deliver his lectures at Manchester under such circumstances and conditions as will exclude people like you and Mr. Gaskell from the number of his audience ? I thought his London plan too narrow. Charles Dickens would not thus limit his sphere of action.

You charge me to write about myself. What can I say on that precious topic ? My health is pretty good. My spirits are not always alike. Nothing happens to me. I hope and expect little in this world, and am thankful that I do not despond and suffer more. Thank you for inquiring after our old servant ; she is pretty well ; the little shawl, etc., pleased her much. Papa, likewise, I am glad to say, is pretty well. With his and my kindest regards to you and Mr. Gaskell, believe me sincerely and affectionately yours,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 534

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *September 22nd*, 1851.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—Our visitor (a relative from Cornwall) having left us, the coast is now clear, so that whenever you

feel inclined to come, papa and I will be truly glad to see you. I *do* wish the splendid weather we have had and are having may accompany you here. I fear I have somewhat grudged the fine days, fearing a change before you come.—Believe me, with papa's regards, yours respectfully and affectionately, C. BRONTË.

Come soon ; if you can, on Wednesday.

## Letter 535

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*September 26th, 1851.*

As I laid down your letter, after reading with interest the graphic account it gives of a very striking scene, I could not help feeling with renewed force a truth, trite enough, yet ever impressive, viz. that it is good to be attracted out of ourselves, to be forced to take a near view of the sufferings, the privations, the efforts, the difficulties of others. If we ourselves live in fulness of content, it is well to be reminded that thousands of our fellow creatures undergo a different lot ; it is well to have sleepy sympathies excited, and lethargic selfishness shaken up. If, on the other hand, we be contending with the special grief—the intimate trial—the peculiar bitterness with which God has seen fit to mingle our own cup of existence, it is very good to know that our overcast lot is not singular ; it stills the repining word and thought—it rouses the flagging strength, to have it vividly set before us that there are countless afflictions in the world, each perhaps rivalling—some surpassing—the private pain over which we are too prone exclusively to sorrow.

All those crowded emigrants had their troubles—their untoward causes of banishment ; you, the looker-on, had 'your wishes and regrets'—your anxieties, alloying your home happiness and domestic bliss ; and the parallel might be pursued further, and still it would be true—still the same ; a thorn in the flesh for each ; some burden, some conflict for all.

How far this state of things is susceptible of amelioration from changes in public institutions—alterations in national habits—may and ought to be earnestly considered : but this is a problem not easily solved. The evils, as you point them out, are great, real, and most obvious : the remedy is obscure and vague ; yet for such difficulties as spring from over-competition emigration must be good ; the new life in a new country must give a new

lease of hope ; the wider field, less thickly peopled, must open a new path for endeavour. But I always think great physical powers of exertion and endurance ought to accompany such a step. . . . I am truly glad to hear that an *original* writer has fallen in your way. Originality is the pearl of great price in literature—the rarest, the most precious claim by which an author can be recommended. Are not your publishing prospects for the coming season tolerably rich and satisfactory? You inquire after ‘Currer Bell.’ It seems to me that the absence of his name from your list of announcements will leave no blank, and that he may at least spare himself the disquietude of thinking he is wanted when it is certainly not his lot to appear.

Perhaps Currer Bell has his secret moan about these matters; but if so he will keep it to himself. It is an affair about which no words need be wasted, for no words can make a change; it is between him and his position, his faculties and his fate.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 536

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*October 3rd, 1851.*

DEAR NELL,—Do not think I have forgotten you because I have not written since your last ; every day I have had you more or less in my thoughts and wondered how your mother was getting on ; let me have a line of information as soon as possible. I have been busy, first with a somewhat unexpected visitor, a cousin from Cornwall who has been spending a few days with us, and now with Miss Wooler who came on Monday. The former personage we can discuss any time when we meet. Miss Wooler is and has been very pleasant. She is like good wine ; I think time improves her, and really, whatever she may be in person, in mind she is younger than when at Roe Head. Papa and she get on extremely well ; I have just heard papa walk into the dining-room and pay her a round compliment on her good sense. I think so far she has been pretty comfortable and likes Haworth, but as she only brought a small hand-basket of luggage with her she cannot stay long.

How are *you*? Write directly. With my love to your mother, etc., good-bye, dear Nell.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 537

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*October 30th, '51.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am not at all intending to go from home at present, I have just refused successively Miss Martineau, Mrs. Gaskell, and Mrs. Forster. I could not go if I would, one person after another in the house has been ailing for the last month or more. First Tabby had the influenza, then Martha took it, and is ill in bed now with quinsy, her second attack, and I grieve to say papa too has taken cold. So far I keep pretty well, and am thankful for it, for who else would nurse them all. Some painful mental worry I have gone through this autumn, but there is no use in dwelling on all that. At present I seem to have some respite. I feel more disinclined than ever for letter-writing. I am glad that your mother is better, and that the Hunsworth people are going on well. Cease to expect me at Brookroyd, I would rather you came to Haworth, I should see more of you. Life is a struggle. Good-bye.—Yours sincerely,

C. B.

## Letter 538

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*November 4th, '51.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Papa, Tabby, and Martha are at present all better, yet none of them well. Martha at present looks feeble, I wish she had a better constitution; as it is, one is always afraid of giving her too much to do, and yet there are many things I cannot undertake myself, and we do not like to change when we have had her so long. How are you getting on in the matter of servants? The other day I received a long letter from India. I told you I did not expect to hear thence, nor did I. The letter is long, but it is worth your while to read it. In its way it has merit, that cannot be denied; abundance of information, talent of a certain kind, alloyed (I think) here and there with errors of taste. He might have spared many of the details of the bath scene, which for the rest tallies exactly with Mr. Thackeray's account of the same process. This little man with all his long letters remains as much a conundrum to me as ever. Your account of the domestic joys at Hunsworth amused me much.



The good folks seem very happy, long may they continue so ! It somewhat cheers me to know that such happiness *does* exist on the earth. Return Mr. Taylor's letter when you have read it. With love to your mother, I am, dear Nell, sincerely yours,

C. B.

## Letter 539

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*November 6th, 1851.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have true pleasure in enclosing for your son Frank a letter of introduction to Mrs. Gaskell, and earnestly do I trust the acquaintance may tend to his good. To make all sure—for I dislike to go on doubtful grounds—I wrote to ask her if she would permit the introduction. Her frank, kind answer pleased me greatly.

I have received the books. I hope to write again when I have read *The Fair Carew*. The very title augurs well—it has no hackneyed sound.—Believe me, sincerely yours, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 540

TO MRS. GASKELL

*November 6th, 1851.*

If anybody would tempt me from home you would ; but, just now, from home I must not, will not go. I feel greatly better at present than I did three weeks ago. For a month or six weeks about the equinox (autumnal or vernal) is a period of the year which, I have noticed, strangely tries me. Sometimes the strain falls on the mental, sometimes on the physical part of me ; I am ill with neuralgic headache, or I am ground to the dust with deep dejection of spirits (not, however, such dejection but I can keep to myself). That weary time has, I think and trust, got over for this year. It was the anniversary of my poor brother's death, and of my sister's failing health : I need say no more.

As to running away from home every time I have a battle of this sort to fight, it would not do : besides the 'weird' would follow. As to shaking it off, that cannot be. I have declined to go to Mrs. Forster, to Miss Martineau, and now I decline to go to you. But listen ! do not think that I throw your kindness away, or that it fails of doing the good you desire. On the contrary,

the feeling expressed in your letter—proved by your invitation—goes *right home* where you would have it to go, and heals as you would have it to heal.

Your description of Frederika Bremer tallies exactly with one I read somewhere, in I know not what book. I laughed out when I got to the mention of Frederika's special accomplishment, given by you with a distinct simplicity that, to my taste, is what the French would call 'impayable.' Where do you find the foreigner who is without some little drawback of this description? It is a pity.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 541

TO JAMES TAYLOR, BOMBAY

HAWORTH, *November 15th*, 1851.

MY DEAR SIR,—Both your communications reached me safely—the note of the 17th September and the letter of the 2nd October. You do yourself less than justice when you stigmatise the latter as 'ill-written.' I found it quite legible, nor did I lose a word, though the lines and letters were so close. I should have been sorry if such had not been the case, as it appeared to me throughout highly interesting. It is observable that the very same information which we have previously collected, perhaps with rather languid attention, from printed books, when placed before us in familiar manuscript, and comprising the actual experience of a person with whom we are acquainted, acquires a new and vital interest: when we know the narrator we seem to realise the tale.

The bath scene amused me much. Your account of that operation tallies in every point with Mr. Thackeray's description in the *Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*. The usage seems a little rough, and I cannot help thinking that equal benefit might be obtained through less violent means; but I suppose without the previous fatigue the after-sensation would not be so enjoyable, and no doubt it is that indolent after-sensation which the self-indulgent Mahometans chiefly cultivate. I think you did right to disdain it.

It would seem to me a matter of great regret that the society at Bombay should be so deficient in all intellectual attraction. Perhaps, however, your occupations will so far absorb your thoughts as to prevent them from dwelling painfully on this

circumstance. No doubt there will be moments when you will look back to London and Scotland, and the friends you have left there, with some yearning; but I suppose business has its own excitement. The new country, the new scenes too, must have their interest; and as you will not lack books to fill your leisure, you will probably soon become reconciled to a change which, for some minds, would too closely resemble exile.

I fear the climate—such as you describe it—must be very trying to an European constitution. In your first letter, you mentioned October as the month of danger; it is now over. Whether you have passed its ordeal safely must yet for some weeks remain unknown to your friends in England—they can but *wish* that such may be the case. You will not expect me to write a letter that shall form a parallel with your own either in quantity or quality; what I write must be brief, and what I communicate must be commonplace and of trivial interest.

My father, I am thankful to say, continues in pretty good health. I read portions of your letter to him and he was interested in hearing them. He charged me when I wrote to convey his very kind remembrances.

I had myself ceased to expect a letter from you. On taking leave at Haworth you said something about writing from India, but I doubted at the time whether it was not one of those forms of speech which politeness dictates; and as time passed, and I did not hear from you, I became confirmed in this view of the subject. With every good wish for your welfare,—I am, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 542

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*November 19th, '51.*

DEAR ELLEN,—All here is much as usual and I was thinking of writing to you this morning when I received your note. I am glad to hear your mother bears this severe weather tolerably, as papa does also. I had a cold chiefly in the throat and chest, but I applied cold water which relieved me, I think, far better than hot applications would have done. The only events in my life consist in that little change occasional letters bring. I have had two from Miss Wooler since she left Haworth which touched me much. She seems to think so much of a little congenial com-

pany. She says she has not for many days known such enjoyment as she experienced during the ten days she stayed here. Yet you know what Haworth is, dull enough.

How could you imagine your last letter offended me? I only disagreed with you on *one point*. The little man's disdain of the sensual pleasure of a Turkish bath had, I must own, my approval. Before answering his epistle I got up my courage to write to Mr. Williams, through whose hands, or those of Mr. Smith, I knew the Indian letter had come, and beg him to give me an impartial judgment of Mr. Taylor's character and disposition, owning that I was very much in the dark. I did not like to continue correspondence without further information. I got the answer which I enclose. You say nothing about the Hunsworth Turtle-doves, how are they? and how is the branch of promise? I hope doing well.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 543

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

December 1851.

DEAR ELLEN,—This last week has been very trying here. Papa has borne it unhurt, but these winds and changes have given me a bad cold of influenza character. Poor old Keeper



"KEEPER."

died last Monday morning; after being ill all night, he went gently to sleep. We laid his old faithful head in the garden. Flossy is dull and misses him. There was something very sad in losing the old dog; yet I am glad he met a natural fate; people kept hinting he ought to be put away, which neither papa nor I liked to think of. If I could get cod-liver oil,



fresh and sweet, I really would take your advice and try it. We have got curtains for the dining-room. I ordered them at the Factory to be dyed crimson, but they are badly dyed and do not please me.

I am truly glad to hear of your mother's improvement. The doctors cannot now deny that she has fairly given them the slip. I admire her, clever old lady!

You ask me about the *Lily and the Bee*. If you have read it, dear Ellen, you have effected an exploit beyond me. I glanced at a few pages and laid it down hopeless, nor can I find courage to resume it. *Margaret Maitland* is a good book and will just suit your mother.—I am, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 544

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *December 17th, '51.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I cannot at present go to see you, but I would be grateful if you could come and see me, even were it only for a few days. To speak truth, I have put on but a poor time of it during this month past. I kept hoping to be better, but was at last obliged to have recourse to medical advice. Sometimes I felt very weak and low, and longed much for society, but could not persuade myself to commit the selfish act of asking you merely for my own relief. The doctor speaks encouragingly, but as yet I get no better. As the illness has been coming on for a long time, it cannot, I suppose, be expected to disappear all at once. I am not confined to bed, but I am weak; have had no appetite for about three weeks, and my nights are very bad. I am well aware myself that extreme and continuous depression of spirits has had much to do with the origin of the illness; and I know a little cheerful society would do me more good than gallons of medicine. If you *can* come, come on Friday. Write to-morrow and say whether this be possible, and what time you will be at Keighley, that I may send the gig. I do not ask you to stay long; a few days is all I request. Remember me to your mother and all at Brookroyd.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

I have got some cod-liver oil, but am forbidden to take it at present. The doctor says it would make me more feverish.

## Letter 545

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*December 31st, '51.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Papa was quite charmed with his crimson velvet rubbers ; he liked the attention, and, besides, it will really be very useful to him ; I am to thank you in the most polite manner possible. Mr. Ruddock came yesterday ; unfortunately I was not so well as I had been last week, my head continued to ache all Monday, and yesterday the parched mouth and loss of appetite returned. Mr. Ruddock, however, repeated that there was no organic disease, only a highly sensitive and irritable condition of the liver. It *was* Mr. Ruddock we saw on the moor, that day we were walking out ; he was going to visit a poor woman. I am glad to hear good news from Hunsworth. You must give my downright hearty sympathy to Mr. Clapham and say I *do* hope he will be better soon. Remember me also to your mother, Ann, and Mercy.

I have just got a letter from Miss Wooler enclosing one to you. You will see she was truly pleased with yours. In haste to save the post.—Yours very faithfully, dear Nell,

C. BRONTË.

I am better to-day.

## Letter 546

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*January 1st, 1852.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I am glad of the opportunity of writing to you, for I have long wished to send you a little note, and was only deterred from doing so by the conviction that the period preceding Christmas must be a very busy one to you.

I have wished to thank you for your last, which gave me very genuine pleasure. You ascribe to Mr. Taylor an excellent character ; such a man's friendship, at any rate, should not be disregarded ; and if the principles and disposition be what you say, faults of manner and even of temper ought to weigh light in the balance. I always believed in his judgment and good sense, but what I doubted was his kindness—he seemed to me a little too harsh, rigid, and unsympathising. Now, judg-

ment, sense, principle are invaluable and quite indispensable points, but one would be thankful for a *little* feeling, a *little* indulgence in addition—without these, poor fallible human nature shrinks under the domination of the sterner qualities. I answered Mr. Taylor's letter by the mail of the 19th November, sending it direct, for, on reflection, I did not see why I should trouble you with it.

Did your son Frank call on Mrs. Gaskell? and how did he like her?

My health has not been very satisfactory lately, but I think, though I vary almost daily, I am much better than I was a fortnight ago. All the winter the fact of my never being able to stoop over a desk without bringing on pain and oppression in the chest has been a great affliction to me, and the want of tranquil rest at night has tried me much, but I hope for the better times. The doctors say that there is no organic mischief.

Wishing a happy New Year to you,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 547

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January —, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am sorry to say my headache did turn out to be symptomatic of relapse, but on the whole I think I am better again now, and I do not in the least regret your going. *Really* when I am downright ill—*i.e.* under the pressure of headache, sickness, or other prostrating ailment, I would rather have it to myself and not feel it augmented by the sense of its being burdensome to others. It is when bodily ailment is gone, and the mind alone languishes, that cheerful and cherished society becomes a boon. You did me great good whilst you stayed here, and you went away just when your kindness would become unavailing, and I and my liver were best left alone. All yesterday I was very sick; to-day I feel somewhat relieved, though qualms of nausea haunt me still. I expect Mr. R. and shall ask him whether part of this sickness is not owing to his medicine, which I suspect and hope. Poor Ellen Taylor, I fear hers will not be a long life. Should she die in New Zealand, it will be most sad for Mary. Mind that the circumstance of your being pretty well just now does not make you grow careless

Ill health is sooner fallen into than got out of. I fear the changeful weather of the last day or two will have tried Mr. Clapham as it tried me, but to-day it is finer. We shall feel its good effects. With kindest regards to all at Brookroyd,—I am, dearest Nell, yours faithfully, C. B.

If I feel that it will do me good to go to Brookroyd for a few days, I will tell you, but at present I am best at home.

## Letter 548

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 14th, 1852.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I have certainly been ill enough since I wrote to you, but do not be alarmed or uneasy. I believe my sufferings have been partly, perhaps in a great measure, owing to the medicine. It was alterative and contained mercury. This did not suit me. I was brought to a sad state. Thank God, I believe I am better, but too weak now to tell you particulars. Poor papa has been in grievous anxiety; on the point of sending for Mr. Teale. I had hard work to restrain him. Mr. Ruddock was sorely flustered when he found what he had done, but I don't much blame him. Can't write more at present. Good-bye, dear Nell.—Yours faithfully, C. B.

Be quite tranquil. Mr. Ruddock vows and protests I shall do perfectly well with time, so that it will even be all the better for me, but it was rough work. I return Mary Gorham's good and *happy* letter.

## Letter 549

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 16th, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I wish you could have seen the coolness with which I captured your letter on its way to papa and at once conjecturing its tenor made its contents my own.

Be quiet. Be tranquil. It is, dear Nell, my decided intention to come to Brookroyd when I can come, but of this last I must positively judge for myself, and I must take my time. I am better to-day, much better, but you can have little idea of the sort of condition into which mercury throws people, to ask me to go from home anywhere in close or open carriage, and as to talking, four



days since I could not well have articulated three sentences, my mouth and tongue were ulcerated : for a week I took no sustenance except half a teacupful of liquid, administered by teaspoonfuls in the course of the day ; yet I did not need nursing, and I kept out of bed. It was enough to burden myself, it would have been misery to me to have annoyed another. Mr. Ruddock says he never in his whole practice knew the same effect produced by the same dose on man, woman, or child, and avows it is owing to an altogether peculiar sensitiveness of constitution. He expressed great regret and annoyance, but affirms it will do me good in the end. If this be so the sufferings are welcome.

My appetite begins to return, my mouth and tongue are healing fast : in short, I believe I am doing well, but it harasses me, dear Nell, to be urged to go from home when I know I cannot. A week or fortnight may make all the difference. You know I generally rally pretty quickly.

With kind love and a mixture of thanks and scolding,—I am,  
yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Poor Mr. Clapham has a lingering time of it ; remember me to him and to your mother, etc.

## Letter 550

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *January 20th*, 1852.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—Your last kind note would not have remained so long unanswered if I had been in better health. While Ellen was with me, I seemed to revive wonderfully, but began to grow worse again the day she left ; and this falling off proved symptomatic of a relapse. My doctor called the next day ; he said the headache from which I was suffering arose from inertness in the liver.

Thank God, I now feel better ; and very grateful am I for the improvement—grateful no less for my dear father's sake than for my own.

Most fully can I sympathise with you in the anxiety you express about your friend. The thought of his leaving England and going out alone to a strange country, with all his natural sensitiveness and retiring diffidence, is indeed painful ; still, my dear Miss Wooler, should he actually go to America, I can but

then suggest to you the same source of comfort and support you have suggested to me, and of which indeed I know you never lose sight—namely, reliance on Providence. ‘God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,’ and He will doubtless care for a good, though afflicted man, amidst whatever difficulties he may be thrown. When you write again, I should be glad to know whether your anxiety on this subject is relieved. I was truly glad to learn through Ellen that Ilkley still continued to agree with your health. Earnestly trusting that the New Year may prove to you a happy and tranquil time,—I am, my dear Miss Wooler, sincerely and affectionately yours, C. BRONTË.

### Letter 551

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 22nd, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I have continued to make progress, and I think very quickly. I do not suppose I am looking much worse than when you were here, though of course I am very thin.

If all be well I hope to come to Brookroyd next week. Mr. Ruddock wished me to put off for another week, but I want to see you, and my spirits sadly need some little support. I do and have done as well as I can, but the hours have been very dark sometimes. Through it all papa continues well, thank God! I intend coming by the same train you took and should therefore reach you in the course of the afternoon, but I will write again to mention the day, etc. I had a note from Amelia the other day which struck me as not being happy somehow. I don’t quite like her frequent recurrence in a rather repining tone to Rosy’s superior good fortune. I am glad to hear that Mr. Clapham is making some progress and that Mrs. Clapham is better.—Believe me, dear Nell, yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

You must not expect me to stay one day longer than a week.

### Letter 552

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*HAWORTH, January 24th, 1852.*

DEAR NELL,—I hope (D.V.) to come to you on Tuesday, and shall be at Bradford about 2 o’clock. If Mr. Clapham can send

the gig for me I shall be glad, it will save so much trouble. I dare not come if it be wet, windy, or very cold.

And now, my dear physician, with reference to putting myself into your hands, you must take notice of this : I am to live on the very plainest fare. At present I do not take tea, only milk and water, with a little sugar and dry bread ; this with an occasional mutton chop is my diet, and I like it better than anything else. Mr. Ruddock has made me take tonics which have stimulated the appetite, but I eat little at a time. I tell you all this to prevent you from giving yourself *one bit* of trouble. It would make me miserable to see you bother yourself, and ill besides. Hoping Tuesday will be fine,—I am, dear Nell, yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 553

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*February 2nd, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I reached home safely a little before five yesterday, all right but for a headache which I am sorry to say continues with me to-day. I found papa well ; he thanks you for the potted tongue, and says ‘old fellows get more kindness from the ladies than young ones.’

I am anxious to know how you got home, I fear you were a little ailing yourself. Be sure and write directly and tell me how Mr. and Mrs. Clapham, your mother, and Mercy are. Love to all.  
—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

I find I have stolen a pencil-case of yours ; I will take care of it till you come.

## Letter 554

TO MRS. GASKELL

*February 6th, 1852.*

Certainly the past winter has been to me a strange time ; had I the prospect before me of living it over again, my prayer must necessarily be ‘Let this cup pass from me.’ That depression of spirits, which I thought was gone by when I wrote last, came back again with a heavy recoil ; internal congestion ensued, and then inflammation. I had severe pain in my right side, frequent burning and aching in my chest ; sleep almost forsook me, or would never come except accompanied by ghastly dreams ; appetite vanished, and slow fever was my continual companion.

It was some time before I could bring myself to have recourse to medical advice. I thought my lungs were affected, and could feel no confidence in the power of medicine. When at last, however, a doctor was consulted, he declared my lungs and chest sound, and ascribed all my sufferings to derangement of the liver, on which organ it seems the inflammation had fallen. This information was a great relief to my dear father, as well as to myself; but I had subsequently rather sharp medical discipline to undergo, and was much reduced. Though not yet well, it is with deep thankfulness that I can say I am *greatly better*. My sleep, appetite, and strength seem all returning. C. BRONTË.

### Letter 555

TO GEORGE SMITH

*February 14th, 1852.*

MY DEAR SIR,—It has been a great delight to me to read Mr. Thackeray's work; and I so seldom now express my sense of kindness that, for once, you must permit me, without rebuke, to thank you for a pleasure so rare and special. Yet I am not going to praise either Mr. Thackeray or his book. I have read, enjoyed, been interested, and, after all, feel full as much ire and sorrow as gratitude and admiration. And still one can never lay down a book of his without the last two feelings having their part, be the subject of treatment what it may. In the first half of the book what chiefly struck me was the wonderful manner in which the writer throws himself into the spirit and letters of the times whereof he treats; the allusions, the illustrations, the style, all seem to me so masterly in their exact keeping, their harmonious consistency, their nice, natural truth, their pure exemption from exaggeration. No second-rate imitator can write in that way; no coarse scene-painter can charm us with an allusion so delicate and perfect. But what bitter satire, what relentless dissection of diseased subjects! Well, and this, too, is right, or would be right, if the savage surgeon did not seem so fiercely pleased with his work. Thackeray likes to dissect an ulcer or an aneurism; he has pleasure in putting his cruel knife or probe into quivering living flesh. Thackeray would not like all the world to be good; no great satirist would like society to be perfect.

As usual, he is unjust to women, quite unjust. There is hardly any punishment he does not deserve for making Lady Castlewood



peep through a keyhole, listen at a door, and be jealous of a boy and a milkmaid. Many other things I noticed that, for my part, grieved and exasperated me as I read; but then, again, came passages so true, so deeply thought, so tenderly felt, one could not help forgiving and admiring.

But I wish he could be told not to care much for dwelling on the political or religious intrigues of the times. Thackeray, in his heart, does not value political or religious intrigues of any age or date. He likes to show us human nature at home, as he himself daily sees it; his wonderful observant faculty likes to be in action. In him this faculty is a sort of captain and leader; and if ever any passage in his writings lacks interest, it is when this master-faculty is for a time thrust into a subordinate position. I think such is the case in the former half of the present volume. Towards the middle he throws off restraint, becomes himself, and is strong to the close. Everything now depends on the second and third volumes. If, in pith and interest, they fall short of the first, a true success cannot ensue. If the continuation be an improvement upon the commencement, if the stream gather force as it rolls, Thackeray will triumph. Some people have been in the habit of terming him the second writer of the day; it just depends on himself whether or not these critics shall be justified in their award. He need not be the second. God made him second to no man. If I were he, I would show myself as I am, not as critics report me; at any rate I would do my best. Mr. Thackeray is easy and indolent, and seldom cares to do his best. Thank you once more; and believe me yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 556

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *February 16th, '52.*

DEAR NELL,—Many thanks for yours. You had a sad reception at Mrs. W.'s. I had quite calculated on your getting the relief and rest which you needed so much. My headache after continuing two days left me, and I have continued very decent indeed ever since, *much* better than I was before leaving home; though the headache, by making me look ill, robbed me of the expected congratulations on improved appearance. I do believe

if the weather would but be pleasant and serene, I should be right enough, better perhaps than I was before my illness. Mr. Ruddock, to my dismay, came blustering in on Saturday. I have just returned Mr. Taylor's MS. with a criticising letter which Mr. Smith may show if he likes. I said what I thought, and I sometimes thought bitter things.

I hope your sister is better by this time, but I somewhat fear that the return of stormy weather, after a few days calm, will be felt injuriously both by her and Mr. Clapham; it has brought me back something of the pain in my side, which I had hoped gone.

Give my kind regards to your mother, Mr. Clapham, and all the rest. Write again soon, and believe me, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

How is your thumb nail? No slight mischance that of turning it back.

## Letter 557

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *February 17th*, 1852.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—Your last welcome letter found me at Brookroyd, whence I am just returned after a fortnight's stay; the change has proved beneficial, not only to my health but more especially to my spirits, which were so prostrated by the debility consequent on my illness, that solitude had become somewhat too trying. If serene weather were only restored, I feel as if I should soon be well again; but these long storms, these incessantly howling winds, depress the nervous system much. I trust Mr. Taylor has been heard of ere now; continued suspense respecting his safe arrival at Wellington would be most painful during weather so inclement. When you write again, just mention whether you have received news of him.

If you would send me one of Mrs. M.'s circulars, I could at any rate make the best use of it in my power; though, whether any favourable results would ensue, must, as you will know, be very uncertain. Mrs. Gaskell's eldest daughter is at school near London; Lady Shuttleworth has but one little girl, a child of seven, for whom, however, she has a foreign governess, and her ladyship seemed to place so little reliance on the competency of Englishwomen to train the young, and to entertain such sweeping

suspensions of English schools in general, that I fear her patronage could hardly be looked for.

As to the French President, it seems to me hard to say what a man with so little scruple and so much ambition will not attempt. I wish, however, the English Press would not prate so much about invasion; if silence were possible in a free country, would it not be far better to prepare silently for what may come, to place the national defences in an effective state, and refrain from breathing a word of apprehension? Doubtless such is the thought of practical men like the Duke of Wellington. I can well conceive his secret impatience at the mischievous gabbling of the newspapers. Wonderful is the French nature!

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 558

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*February 24th, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I return Mary Gorham's with thanks. The time of your visit does not seem very distant; three months will soon pass. I am sorry, dear Nell, you are treating the subject of my going to Sussex as if it were at all a probable thing. Let me say distinctly, it is not at all likely; few things less so, as far as I can see.

I am glad to hear your sister, Mrs. Clapham, is better; perhaps this illness may improve her general health. You do not mention Mr. Clapham. I hope he still progresses. As to papa, his health has been really wonderful this winter; good sleep, good spirits, an excellent steady appetite—all seem to mark vigour; may it but continue! As for me, I yet do well; could I but get rid of indigestion and headache I should manage, but these pains pursue me.

The Indian mail brought me nothing.—I am, dear Nell, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 559

TO JAMES TAYLOR

HAWORTH [*undated*].

I spent a few weeks in town last summer, as you have heard, and was much interested by many things I heard and saw there.

What now chiefly dwells in my memory are Mr. Thackeray's lectures, Mademoiselle Rachel's acting, D'Aubigné's, Melvill's, and Maurice's preaching, and the Crystal Palace.

Mr. Thackeray's lectures you will have seen mentioned and commented on in the papers; they were very interesting. I could not always coincide with the sentiments expressed, or the opinions broached; but I admired the gentlemanlike ease, the quiet humour, the taste, the talent, the simplicity, and the originality of the lecturer.

Rachel's acting transfixed me with wonder, enchained me with interest, and thrilled me with horror. The tremendous force with which she expresses the very worst passions in their strongest essence forms an exhibition as exciting as the bull-fights of Spain and the gladiatorial combats of old Rome, and (it seemed to me) not one whit more moral than these poisoned stimulants to popular ferocity. It is scarcely human nature that she shows you; it is something wilder and worse; the feelings and fury of a fiend. The great gift of genius she undoubtedly has; but, I fear, she rather abuses it than turns it to good account.

With all the three preachers I was greatly pleased. Melvill seemed to me the most eloquent, Maurice the most in earnest; had I the choice, it is Maurice whose ministry I should frequent.

On the Crystal Palace I need not comment. You must already have heard too much of it. It struck me at the first with only a vague sort of wonder and admiration; but having one day the privilege of going over it in company with an eminent countryman of yours, Sir David Brewster, and hearing, in his friendly Scotch accent, his lucid explanation of many things that have been to me before a sealed book, I began a little better to comprehend it, or at least a small part of it; whether its final results will equal expectation I know not.

C. BRONTË.



## CHAPTER XXVII

## LONELY HOURS

FROM March to October 1852—the months in which *Villette* was being written, with long intervals of rest of a kind—were among the saddest of Charlotte Brontë's life. She seemed to suffer from a reaction from all the visiting of the previous year. She saw few people, and only varied the quiet, monotonous life of Haworth by a lonely journey to her sister Anne's grave at Scarborough. The letters written during these months call for but little comment. One is struck, however, by the absence of correspondence with her literary friends. The world takes little count to-day of the writer who drops out of its ken for a year or two, and it must have been even so half a century back. Three years separated the publication of *Shirley* from the publication of *Villette*, and although the success of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley* had been great, it is clear that the writer of these books could no longer be of importance to the London lion-hunters, even had she desired it. As it was, she led a life of painful isolation that must seem extraordinary to the average successful novelist of our time. One marked fact that these letters reveal is that Mr. James Taylor had caught a firmer hold on her mind and heart than she had been conscious of hitherto, and that, had the 'little man,' as she so frequently termed him, come hastily over from Bombay, he might most certainly have won for his wife one of the most distinguished authors of her time.

## Letter 560

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *March —*, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—It is not at all likely that my book will be ready at the time you mention. If my health is spared I shall get on with it as fast as is consistent with its being done, if not *well*, yet as well as I can do it—*not one whit faster*. When the mood leaves me (it has left me now, without vouchsafing so much as a word of a message when it will return) I put by the MS. and wait till it comes back again. God knows I sometimes have to wait long—*very* long it seems to me. Meantime, if I might make a request to you, it would be this: Please to say nothing about my book till it is written and in your hands. You may not like it. I am not myself elated with it as far as it has gone, and authors, you need not be told, are always tenderly indulgent, even blindly partial, to their own. Even if it should turn out reasonably well, still I regard it as ruin to the prosperity of an ephemeral book, like a novel, to be much talked of beforehand, as if it were something great. People are apt to conceive, or at least to profess, exaggerated expectation, such as no performance can realise; then ensue disappointment and the due revenge, detraction and failure. If when I write I were to think of the critics who, I know, are waiting for Currer Bell, ready ‘to break all his bones or ever he comes to the bottom of the den,’ my hand would fall paralysed on my desk. However, I can but do my best, and then muffle my head in the mantle of Patience, and sit down at her feet and wait.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 561

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March 4th*, 1852.

DEAR ELLEN,—The news of Ellen Taylor’s death<sup>1</sup> came to me last week in a letter from Mary; a long letter, which wrung my heart so, in its simple, strong, truthful emotion, I have only ventured to read it once. It ripped up half-seared wounds with terrible force. The death-bed was just the same, breath failing, etc.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen Taylor, Mary’s cousin, who joined her in New Zealand, and who comes so frequently into Mary Taylor’s letters to Ellen Nussey and Charlotte Brontë.

She fears she shall now, in her dreary solitude, become a 'stern, harsh, selfish woman.' This fear struck home; again and again I have felt it for myself, and what is *my* position to M.'s? I should break out in energetic wishes that she would return to England, if reason would permit me to believe that prosperity and happiness would there await her. May God help her, as God only can help!

I like to hear of your being cheerful, but I fear you impose on yourself too much fatigue with all this entertainment of visitors. Poor Emma ——! Will she be at all provided for in case of her father's death? She will hardly like to turn governess. How are Mr. and Mrs. Clapham, you have not mentioned them lately, and how is your mother? I continue better, and papa is getting through the spring admirably.

I am sure Miss Wooler would enjoy her visit to you, as much as you her company. Dear Nell, I thank you sincerely for your discreet and friendly silence on the point alluded to. I had feared it would be discussed between you two, and had an inexpressible shrinking at the thought; now, less than ever does it seem a matter open to discussion. I hear nothing, and you must quite understand that if I feel any uneasiness it is not that of confirmed and fixed regard, but that anxiety which is inseparable from a state of absolute uncertainty about a somewhat momentous matter. I do not know, I am not sure myself, that any other termination would be better than lasting estrangement and unbroken silence. Yet a good deal of pain has been and must be gone through in that case. However, to each his burden.

I have not yet read the papers; D.V., I will send them to-morrow.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Understand that in whatever I have said above, it was not for pity or sympathy. I hardly pity myself. Only I wish that in all matters in this world there was fair and open dealing, and no underhand work.

## Letter 562

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*March 5th, '52.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I suppose as I have heard nothing since your last, that the baby at Hunsworth is now better. I do not return Amelia's letters, conceiving that they are hardly such as you will make a point of retaining. Seldom have I seen any from her

that impressed me less favourably ; the loud, weak outcry is too much ; I pity her, but less than I should do if I did not feel that she is straining her emotions to the utmost. All that part about Hopkinson's wife and her child is sad. The apostrophe to you, 'You never were a mother (!!!), etc.,' is really theatrical, and entirely superfluous. It is well that Amelia has a better side to her character than all this. If such be the sort of diet on which she feeds Rosy, I do not wonder at the latter's occasional silence. This kind of correspondence would do me up.

I hope you are all better at Brookroyd ; the cold weather disagreed with me very much at first. I think, however, I am getting used to it, though I still have frequent headaches and just now a swelled face and tic in the cheek-bone. Mr. Ruddock has contradicted himself about Quinine, allowed that it will not do for me, and prescribed another tonic which I have taken, though without any benefit that I can perceive.

I had a letter from Miss Martineau a few days since. She has actually suppressed her intended work, calls it now 'a foolish prank,' but it is obvious she is much chagrined.<sup>1</sup>

I suppose you have received your Sussex parcel ere this, and I trust its contents are satisfactory. This dry, fine frosty weather ought to suit you, dear Nell. Write soon and tell me how you are. Papa is well.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 563

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

March 7th, 1852.

DEAR ELLEN,—I hope both your mother's cold and yours are quite well ere this. Papa has got something of his spring attack of bronchitis, but so far it is in greatly ameliorated form, very different to what it has been for three years past. I do trust it may pass off thus mildly. I continue better.

Dear Nell, I told you from the beginning that my going to Sussex was a most improbable event ; I tell you now that unless want of health should absolutely compel me to give up work and leave home (which I trust and hope will not be the case) I *certainly shall not think of going*. It is better to be decided, and

<sup>1</sup> This was a cancelled novel which was to be entitled *Oliver Weld*. The author had formerly called it *Edward Howard*. See letters to George Smith, Nov. 7, 1851, and Jan. 1, 1852, in 'Haworth edition' of the *Life*.



decided I must be. You can never want me less than when in Sussex surrounded by amusement and friends. I do not know that I shall go to Scarbro', but it might be possible to spare a fortnight to go there (for the sake of a sad duty rather than pleasure), when I could not give a month to a longer excursion. You mention 'meanness' in connection with my going to Scarbro',—did you think I meant to sponge upon Miss Wooler? No, I intend to take lodgings and pay for them honestly! I have not a word of news to tell you. Many mails have come from India since I was at Brookroyd; expectation would at times be on the alert, but disappointment knocked her down. I have not heard a syllable, and cannot think of making inquiries at Cornhill. Well, long suspense in any matter usually proves somewhat cankering, but God orders all things for us, and to His Will we must submit. Be sure to keep a calm mind, expect nothing.—  
Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 564

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*March 10th, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—With regard to the pains in chest and shoulders, if they still continue there should be no delay in asking the opinion of a medical man, Mr. Rayner for instance. Pains of this sort often indicate *congestion* of some organ; in *my* case it was the liver, and I had the pains at intervals for three years before I knew their origin. Have you tried a moderate dose of opening medicine? Two camomile pills might be of use, but you had better speak to a doctor.

The hand-squeezing adventure made me smile. Who was the gentleman? Could it be Mr. —? Are you sure he was —? Was not the squeeze probably too slight to be felt? Have you not tormented yourself about what was perceptible to yourself only?

Mary Gorham's letter is very interesting; it shows a mind one cannot but truly admire. Compare its serene, trusting strength with poor Mrs. Joe Taylor's vacillating dependence. When the latter was in her first burst of happiness, I never remember the feeling finding vent in expressions of gratitude to God. There was always a continued claim upon your sympathy in the mistrust and doubt she felt of her own bliss. Mary believes, has faith, is grateful and at peace: yet while happy in herself, how thoughtful she is for others!

I enclose a letter from New Zealand which I ought to have sent before, but forgot it until my last note was sealed. It contains nothing new, being indeed of a date prior to the one you have already seen, but somehow it tends to confirm one's fears about Ellen Taylor. With love to all at Brookroyd,—Believe me, dear Nell, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 565

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *March 12th*, 1852.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER.—Your kind note holds out a strong temptation, but one that *must be resisted*. From home I must not go unless health or some cause equally imperative render a change necessary. For nearly four months now (*i.e.* since I became ill) I have not put pen to paper. My work has been lying untouched, and my faculties have been rusting for want of exercise. Further relaxation is out of the question, and I *will not permit myself to think of it*. My publisher groans over my long delays; I am sometimes provoked to check the expression of his impatience with short and crusty answers.

Yet the pleasure I now deny myself I would fain regard as only deferred. I heard something about your proposing to visit Scarbro' in the course of the summer, and could I by the close of July or August bring my task to a certain point, how glad should I be to join you there for awhile!

Ellen will probably go to the south about May to make a stay of two or three months; she has formed a plan for my accompanying her and taking lodgings on the Sussex coast; but the scheme seems to me impracticable for many reasons, and, moreover, my medical man doubts the advisability of my going southward in summer, he says it might prove very enervating, whereas Scarbro' or Burlington would brace and strengthen. However, I dare not lay plans at this distance of time. For me so much must depend, first on papa's health (which throughout the winter has been, I am thankful to say, really excellent), and second, on the progress of work, a matter not wholly contingent on wish or will, but lying in a great measure beyond the reach of effort and out of the pale of calculation.

I am truly glad to learn that satisfactory tidings have been received regarding Mr. Taylor; he may prosper better than could be anticipated, foreign scenes and faces may prove a salutary

stimulus; ere now I have observed that persons of diffident, self-doubting character are more at ease amongst total strangers than with those to whom they are partially known.

I will not write more at present, as I wish to save this post. All in the house would join in kind remembrances to you if they knew I was writing. Tabby and Martha both frequently inquire after Miss Wooler, and desire their respects when an opportunity offers of presenting the same.—Believe me, yours always affectionately and respectfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 566

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March 23rd*, 1852.

DEAR ELLEN,—Let me fulfil in this note a duty I forgot in the last, to thank you for the pretty doyley, and to enclose payment in postage stamps. I gave your mother *The Women of Christianity*. I have not been to visit Miss Wooler; she asked me very kindly and I should have liked it, but felt it incumbent on me to refuse, as I often feel it incumbent on me to refuse you.

My health has been decidedly better lately, less headache, pain in the side sometimes, not often. Papa now begins to say I am looking better; he, thank God, is well and looks well.

H. C.'s account of J. N. is beautiful; if I were a man, that is the sort of family I would not marry into, the sort of father-in-law I would not have. I don't envy Mr. R. You may well felicitate yourself that such do not find you kindred in the spirit, and *that* they never will.

Did you go to Rouse Mill? How did you enjoy yourself and whom did you see?

You say, dear Nell, that you often wish I would chat on paper, as you do. How can I? where are my materials? Is my life fertile in subjects of chat? What callers do I see? What visits do I pay? No, you must chat, and I must listen, and say 'Yes,' and 'No,' and 'Thank you!' for five minutes' recreation.

I don't know what that dear Mrs. Joe Taylor will make of her little one in the end: between port wine and calomel, and Mr. B. and Mr. A. I should not like to be in its socks. Yet I think it will live; that it will ever be a good life I do *not* think.

I am amused at the interest you take in politics. Don't expect to rouse me; to me, all Ministries and all Oppositions seem to be pretty much alike. Disraeli was factious as leader of the Oppo-

sition; Lord John Russell is going to be factious, now that he has stepped into Disraeli's shoes. Confound them all. Lord Derby's 'Christian tone and spirit,' is worth three half-pence farthing.—  
Yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 567

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

March 25th, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—Mr. Smith intimated a short time since that he had some thoughts of publishing a reprint of *Shirley*. Having revised the work, I now enclose the errata. I have likewise sent off to-day, per rail, a return box of Cornhill books.

I have lately read, with great pleasure, *The Two Families*.<sup>1</sup> This work, it seems, should have reached me in January; but, owing to a mistake, it was detained at the Dead Letter Office, and lay there nearly two months. I liked the commencement very much; the close seemed to me scarcely equal to *Rose Douglas*. I thought the authoress committed a mistake in shifting the main interest from the two personages on whom it first rests—viz. Ben Wilson and Mary—to other characters of quite inferior conception. Had she made Ben and Mary her hero and heroine, and continued the development of their fortunes and characters in the same truthful natural vein in which she commences it, an excellent, even an original book might have been the result. As for Lillias and Ronald, they are mere romantic figments, with nothing of the genuine Scottish peasant about them; they do not even speak the Caledonian dialect; they palaver like a fine lady and gentleman.

I ought long since to have acknowledged the gratification with which I read Miss Kavanagh's *Women of Christianity*. Her charity and (on the whole) her impartiality are very beautiful. She touches, indeed, with too gentle a hand the theme of Elizabeth of Hungary; and, in her own mind, she evidently misconstrues the fact of Protestant charities *seeming* to be fewer than Catholic. She forgets, or does not know, that Protestantism is a quieter creed than Romanism; as it does not clothe its priesthood in scarlet, so neither does it set up its good women for saints, canonise their names, and proclaim their good works. In the records of man their almsgiving will not, perhaps, be found registered, but heaven has its account as well as earth.

With kind regards to yourself and family, who, I trust, have

<sup>1</sup> *The Two Families* and *Rose Douglas* were both published in 1852. Their author was Mrs. S. R. Whitehead.



all safely weathered the rough winter lately past, as well as the east winds, which are still nipping our spring in Yorkshire, I am,  
my dear sir, yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 568

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

April 3rd, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—The box arrived quite safely, and I very much thank you for the contents, which are most kindly selected.

As you wished me to say what I thought of *The School for Fathers*,<sup>1</sup> I hastened to read it. The book seems to me clever, interesting, very amusing, and likely to please generally. There is a merit in the choice of ground which is not yet too hackneyed; the comparative freshness of subject, character, and epoch gives the tale a certain attractiveness. There is also, I think, a graphic rendering of situations, and a lively talent for describing whatever is visible and tangible—what the eye meets on the surface of things. The humour appears to me such as would answer well on the stage; most of the scenes seem to demand dramatic accessories to give them their full effect. But I think one cannot with justice bestow higher praise than this. To speak candidly, I felt, in reading the tale, a wondrous hollowness in the moral and sentiment; a strange dilettante shallowness in the purpose and feeling. After all, 'Jack' is not much better than a 'Tony Lumpkin,' and there is no very great breadth of choice between the clown he *is* and the fop his father would have made him. The grossly material life of the old English fox-hunter and the frivolous existence of the fine gentleman present extremes, each in its way so repugnant that one feels half inclined to smile when called upon to sentimentalise over the lot of a youth forced to pass from one to the other; torn from the stables to be ushered, perhaps, into the ball-room. Jack dies mournfully indeed, and you are sorry for the poor fellow's untimely end; but you cannot forget that if he had not been thrust into the way of Colonel Penruddock's weapon he might possibly have broken his neck in a fox-hunt. The character of Sir Thomas Warren is excellent; consistent throughout. That of Mr. Addison not bad, but sketchy, a mere outline—wanting colour and finish. The man's portrait

<sup>1</sup> *The School for Fathers* was written by Josepha Gulston under the pseudonym of 'Talbot Gwynne.' She also wrote *Young Singleton*, *The School for Dreamers*, *Silas Barnstarke*, and *Nanette and her Lovers*.

is there, and his costume, and fragmentary anecdotes of his life; but where is the man's nature—soul and self? I say nothing about the female characters—not one word; only that Lydia seems to me like a pretty little actress, prettily dressed, gracefully appearing and disappearing, and reappearing in a genteel comedy, assuming the proper sentiments of her part with all due tact and naïveté and—that is all.

Your description of the model man of business is true enough, I doubt not; but we will not fear that society will ever be brought quite to this standard; human nature (bad as it is) has, after all, elements that forbid it. But the very tendency to such a consummation—the marked tendency, I fear, of the day—produces, no doubt, cruel suffering. Yet, when the evil of competition passes a certain limit, must it not in time work its own cure? I suppose it will, but then through some convulsed crisis, shattering all around it like an earthquake. Meantime for how many is life made a struggle, enjoyment and rest curtailed; labour terribly enhanced beyond almost what nature can bear! I often think that this world would be the most terrible of enigmas, were it not for the firm belief that there is a world to come, where conscientious effort and patient pain will meet their reward.

Believe me, my dear sir, sincerely yours, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 569

TO LÆTITIA WHEELWRIGHT

HAWORTH, *April 12th*, 1852.

DEAR LÆTITIA,—Your last letter gave me much concern. I had hoped you were long ere this restored to your usual health, and it both pained and surprised me to hear that you still suffer so much from debility. I cannot help thinking your constitution is naturally sound and healthy. Can it be the air of London which disagrees with you? For myself, I struggled through the winter and the early part of spring often with great difficulty. My friend<sup>1</sup> stayed with me a few days in the early part of January—she could not be spared longer. I was better during her visit, but had a relapse soon after she left me, which reduced my strength very much. It cannot be denied that the solitude of my position fearfully aggravated its other evils. Some long, stormy days and nights there were when I felt such a craving for support and com-

<sup>1</sup> Miss Ellen Nussey, who never met Miss Wheelwright.

panionship as I cannot express. Sleepless, I lay awake night after night ; weak and unable to occupy myself, I sat in my chair day after day, the saddest memories my only company. It was a time I shall never forget, but God sent it and it must have been for the best.

I am better now, and very grateful do I feel for the restoration of tolerable health ; but, as if there was always to be some affliction, papa, who enjoyed wonderful health during the whole winter, is ailing with his spring attack of bronchitis. I earnestly trust it may pass over in the comparatively ameliorated form in which it has hitherto shown itself.

Let me not forget to answer your question about the cataract. Tell your papa my father was seventy at the time he underwent an operation ; he was most reluctant to try the experiment—could not believe that at his age and with his want of robust strength it would succeed. I was obliged to be very decided in the matter and to act entirely on my own responsibility. Nearly six years have now elapsed since the cataract was extracted (it was not merely depressed). He has never once, during that time, regretted the step, and a day seldom passes that he does not express gratitude and pleasure at the restoration of that inestimable privilege of vision whose loss he once knew.

I hope the next tidings you hear of your brother Charles will be satisfactory for his parents' and sisters' sake as well as his own. Your poor mamma has had many successive trials, and her uncomplaining resignation seems to offer us all an example worthy to be followed. Remember me kindly to her, to your papa, and all your circle, and—Believe me, with best wishes to yourself, yours sincerely

C. BRONTË.

'I had given Miss Brontë, in one of my letters,' says Mrs. Gaskell, 'an outline of the story on which I was then engaged.' This would be *Ruth*, published in 1853.

## Letter 570

TO MRS. GASKELL

The sketch you give of your work (respecting which I am, of course, dumb) seems to me very noble ; and its purpose may be as useful in practical result as it is high and just in theoretical tendency. Such a book may restore hope and energy to many

who thought they had forfeited their right to both, and open a clear course for honourable effort to some who deemed that they and all honour had parted company in this world.

Yet—hear my protest!

Why should she die? Why are we to shut up the book weeping?

My heart fails me already at the thought of the pang it will have to undergo. And yet you must follow the impulse of your own inspiration. If *that* commands the slaying of the victim, no bystander has a right to put out his hand to stay the sacrificial knife; but I hold you a stern priestess in these matters.

C. BRONTË

## Letter 571

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 22nd, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I have forgotten whether the 22nd is your birthday or mine; whichever it be, I wish you many happy returns.

Poor Mr. ——. I am very sorry to hear of his illness, especially as I fear he will never be strong.

You seem to be quite gay, in paying and receiving visits; take care of your health in the midst of it all. Papa, I think, is pretty well again; the attack was comparatively very slight. I, too, am keeping better; a little pain sometimes; I keep thin; but I am thankful to be so well.

When I read to papa Mrs. Joe Taylor's account of her system with the poor little water-patient, he said if that child died, its parents ought to be tried for infanticide! I think they go too far, yet she says it is stronger. It is quite unlikely that you will get to Haworth before you go into Sussex. I deny myself pleasure just now.—Yours sincerely enough (as you see), C. BRONTË.

## Letter 572

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*HAWORTH, May 11th, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I must adhere to my resolution of neither visiting nor being visited at present. Stay you quietly at Brookroyd till you go into Sussex, as I shall stay at Haworth; as sincere a



farewell can be taken with the heart as with the lips, and perhaps less painful. I am glad the weather is changed; this return of the south-west wind suits me; but I hope you have no cause to regret the departure of your favourite east wind. What you say about Amelia does not surprise me. I read in a French book lately, a sentence to this effect, that 'marriage might be defined as the state of two-fold selfishness.' Let the single therefore take comfort. Thank you for Mary Gorham's letter. She *does* seem most happy; and I cannot tell you how much more real, lasting, and better-warranted her happiness seems than ever Amelia's did. I think so much of it is in herself, and her own serene, pure, trusting, religious nature. Amelia's always gave one the idea of a vacillating, unsteady rapture; entirely dependent on circumstances with all their fluctuations. If Mary lives to be a mother, you will then see a still greater difference.

I wish you, dear Ellen, all health and enjoyment in your visit; and, as far as one can judge at present, there seems a fair prospect of the wish being realised.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 573

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, May 18th.

DEAR ELLEN,—I enclose Mary's letter announcing Ellen Taylor's death and Ellen's two last letters, sorrowful documents, all of them. I received them this morning from Hunsworth without any note or directions where to send them, but I think, if I mistake not, Amelia in a previous note told me to transmit them to you. What you say about your sister Ann concerns me much; every time I have seen her for some years I have been struck by her sickly and weary look; most certainly there must be something seriously wrong, either derangement or disease of some organ. It is very many years now since she has enjoyed good health. I hope you will write again very soon and let me know particularly how she gets on. Do not fear, dear Nell, that I shall think you conceited in what you say about Mr. —, and do not apprehend either that I shall give you advice. I always think the persons most concerned are those who alone can rightly judge the expediency or in expediency of their own case. That they always *do* rightly judge I will not affirm, but if their bias is to error, no other hand can rectify it.

It seems desirable that you should have been able to start from home at once and without impediment, but who knows? A temporary delay may turn out for the best after all. It is really too bad of Mercy to give trouble just now.

Be sure to write soon, and believe me, yours faithfully,

C. B.

## Letter 574

TO THE REV. P. BRONTË, HAWORTH, YORKS

CLIFF HOUSE, FILEY, *June 2na*, 1852.

DEAR PAPA,—Thank you for your letter, which I was so glad to get that I think I must answer it by return of post. I had expected one yesterday, and was perhaps a little unreasonably anxious when disappointed, but the weather has been so *very* cold that I feared either you were ill or Martha worse. I hope Martha will take care of herself. I cannot help feeling a little uneasy about her.

On the whole, I get on very well here, but I have not bathed yet, as I am told it is much too cold and too early in the season. The sea is very grand. Yesterday it was a somewhat unusually high tide, and I stood about an hour on the cliffs yesterday afternoon watching the tumbling in of great tawny turbid waves, that made the whole shore white with foam and filled the air with a sound hollower and deeper than thunder. There are so very few visitors at Filey yet that I and a few sea-birds and fishing-boats have often the whole expanse of sea, shore, and cliff to ourselves. When the tide is out the sands are wide, long, and smooth, and very pleasant to walk on. When the high tides are in, not a vestige of sand remains. I saw a great dog rush into the sea yesterday, and swim and bear up against the waves like a seal. I wonder what Flossy would say to that.

On Sunday afternoon I went to a church which I should like Mr. Nicholls to see. It was certainly not more than thrice the length and breadth of our passage, floored with brick, the walls green with mould, the pews painted white, but the paint almost all worn off with time and decay. At one end there is a little gallery for the singers, and when these personages stood up to perform, they all turned their backs upon the congregation, and the congregation turned *their* backs on the pulpit and parson. The effect of this manœuvre was so ludicrous, I could hardly help laughing; had Mr. Nicholls been there he certainly would have

laughed out. Looking up at the gallery and seeing only the broad backs of the singers presented to their audience was excessively grotesque. There is a well-meaning but utterly inactive clergyman at Filey, and Methodists flourish.

I cannot help enjoying Mr. Butterfield's defeat; and yet in one sense this is a bad state of things, calculated to make working people both discontented and insubordinate. Give my kind regards, dear papa, to Mr. Nicholls, Tabby, and Martha. Charge Martha to beware of draughts, and to get such help in her cleaning as she shall need. I hope you will continue well.— Believe me, your affectionate daughter, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 575

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

CLIFF HOUSE, FILEY, *June 6th*, 1852.

DEAR ELLEN,—I am at Filey utterly alone. Do not be angry, the step is right. I considered it, and resolved on it with due deliberation. Change of air was necessary; there were reasons why I should *not* go to the south, and why I should come here. On Friday I went to Scarborough, visited the churchyard and stone. It must be re-faced and re-lettered; there are five errors. I gave the necessary directions. *That* duty, then, is done; long has it lain heavy on my mind; and that was a pilgrimage I felt I could only make alone.

I am in our old lodgings at Mrs. Smith's; not, however, in the same rooms, but in less expensive apartments. They seemed glad to see me, remembered you and me very well, and, seemingly, with great goodwill. The daughter who used to wait on us is just married. Filey seems to me much altered; more lodging-houses, some of them very handsome, have been built; the sea has all its old grandeur. I walk on the sands a good deal, and try *not* to feel desolate and melancholy. How sorely my heart longs for you, I need not say. I have bathed once; it seemed to do me good. I may, perhaps, stay here a fortnight. There are as yet scarcely any visitors. A Lady Wenlock is staying at the large house of which you used so vigilantly to observe the inmates. One day I set out with intent to trudge to Filey Bridge, but was frightened back by two cows. I mean to try again some morning.

Mrs. Smith in talking about Mr. and Mrs. Hudson yesterday,

observed that they were now in altered circumstances ; I was sorry to hear this. Dear Nell, part of your letter touched me to the heart, but you should have been explicit. What makes you so *certain*? Have you just grounds for your present conclusion? Not that I would wish to revive deceptive hopes. You know I am always for facing the stern truth ; but still, life seems hard and dreary for some of us. And yet it must be accepted, and with submission.

I left papa well. I have been a good deal troubled with headache, and with some pain in the side since I came here, but I feel this has been owing to the cold wind, for very cold has it been till lately ; at present I feel better. Shall I send the papers to you as usual? Write again directly, and tell me this, and anything and everything else that comes into your mind.—Believe me, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 576

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

FILEY, June 16th, 1852.

DEAR ELLEN,—I send the *Examiner* with this. The *Leader* will be out of place at C—— ; it had better not go. Be quite easy about me. I really think I am better for my stay at Filey ; that I have derived more benefit from it than I dared to anticipate. I believe, could I stay here two months and enjoy something like social cheerfulness as well as exercise and good air, my health would be quite renewed. This, however, cannot possibly be ; but I am most thankful for the good received. I may stay another week.

Tell me no particulars, dear Nell, that would give you pain. I only asked because I thought you might be viewing the subject too hardly for yourself.

Notice this. A visit that opens very pleasantly often closes in pain and disappointment, and *vice versa*. Be of good courage. I fancy somehow you will be more comfortable when the wedding is over.

Your plan about the school-girls, the little caps, the flower-scattering, etc., made me smile, and still more the idea of my aiding and advising in it were I on the spot. Not at all ; I should not relish it in the least. Do it if you like—your motive is kind and excellent. Mary and her spouse may like that sort of thing ; you know best.

I return E. Sherwood's letter. I am sorry for her. I believe she



suffers; but I do not like her style of expressing herself; it absolutely reminds me of Amelia Walker. Grief as well as joy manifests itself in most different ways in different people; and I doubt not she is sincere and in earnest when she talks of her 'sainted precious father'; but I could wish she used simpler language. Write again soon, and believe me, yours faithfully,

C. B.

## Letter 577

TO LÆTITIA WHEELRIGHT

FILEY, June 16th, 1852.

DEAR LÆTITIA,—I return that most precious document—the letter of Maria Miller. Selfish indeed is the policy which has dictated it—worldly the adroitness with which the suggestion has been carried out. The impudent pretence of revived interest (under the circumstances, *it is sheer impudence*), the sly postponement of her real motive to the postscript, are too bad; yet the whole is but clumsily managed—being quite transparent. If you wish to have my opinion about answering it—I can only say it seems to me you are bound to consult nothing in the world in this matter but your own inclination and convenience. No deference is due to Mrs. W. P. Robertson. Alas! she proves herself too unmistakably selfish.

I think the less you have to do with her or any of her affairs—the better. The residence at Boulogne does not sound very well; Boulogne is the asylum of a not very respectable class. The publication of a work by subscription is a decidedly objectionable, shifty, shabby expedient. Wash your clean hands of them, Lætitia: keep out of the mess. It grieves me much that your state of health is still so far from satisfactory.—Yours affectionately,

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

## Letter 578

TO MISS WOOLER

FILEY BAY, June 23rd, 1852.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—Your kind and welcome note reached me at this place, where I have been staying three weeks *quite alone*. Change and sea-air had become necessary; distance and other considerations forbade my accompanying Ellen to the south, much as I should have liked it, had I felt quite free and unfettered; Ellen told me some time ago that you were not

likely to visit Scarbro' till the autumn, so I forthwith packed my trunk and betook myself here. The first week or ten days I greatly feared the seaside would not suit me, for I suffered almost constantly from headache and other harassing ailments; the weather too was dark, stormy, and excessively, bitterly cold; my solitude, under such circumstances, partook of the character of desolation; I had some dreary evening hours and night-vigils. However, that passed; I think I am now better and stronger from the change, and in a day or two hope to return home. Ellen told me that Mr. W—— said—people with my tendency to congestion of the liver, should walk three or four hours every day; accordingly I have walked as much as I could since I came here, and look almost as sunburnt and weather-beaten as a fisherman or a bathing-woman, with being out in the open air. As to my work, it has stood obstinately still for a long while; certainly a torpid liver makes torpid brains: no spirit moves me. If this state of things does not entirely change, my chance of a holiday in the autumn is not worth much. Yet I should be very sorry not to be able to meet you for a little while at Scarbro'.

The duty to be discharged at Scarbro' was the chief motive that drew me to the East Coast: I have been there, visited the churchyard, seen the stone, there were five errors, consequently I had to give directions for its being re-faced and re-lettered.

My dear Miss Wooler, I do most truly sympathise with you on the success of your kind efforts to provide for your young kinsman; I have known what your feelings would be under the circumstances. To me, the decision of the uncles seems too hard, too worldly, and I am glad that Providence saw fit to make you the means of awarding him a milder doom. Poor youth! such banishment might have been justifiable in the case of a rough, reckless, unmanageable boy, but for one whose disadvantages had their source in over-timidity and weak nerves, it would have been really cruel. Very grateful must be his mother's feelings towards you.

Give my kind regards to Mr. and Mrs. Clapham.

## Letter 579

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *July 1st, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am again at home, where (thank God) I found all well. I certainly feel much better than I did, and

would fain trust that the improvement may prove permanent. Do not be alarmed about the pains in your chest and shoulders, they are certainly not desirable, but, I believe, not dangerous nor indicative of serious ailment. The weather no doubt has much to do with them ; certain states of the atmosphere produce more or less of visceral congestion, and these pains are the result ; such is my theory, gathered from experience. The first fortnight I was at Filey I had constantly recurring pain in the right side, just in the middle of the chest, burning and aching between the shoulders, and sick headache into the bargain. My spirits at the same time were cruelly depressed, prostrated sometimes. I feared the misery and the sufferings of last winter were all returning, consequently I am now indeed thankful to find myself so much better. Tell me particularly how you are?

You ask about India. Let us dismiss the subject in a few words and not recur to it. All is silent as the grave. Cornhill is silent too. There has been bitter disappointment there at my having no work ready for this season. We must not rely upon our fellow-creatures, only on ourselves, and on Him who is above both us and them. My labours as you call them stand in abeyance, and I cannot hurry them. I must take my own time, however long that time may be.

I was amused to learn from Miss Martineau that Joe Taylor and suite during their late visit to Ambleside waited actually on *her* under the plea of being *my* friends. I fancy she received them very kindly. She terms Amelia a tranquil little Dutch woman. Joe's organ of combativeness and contradiction amused and amazed her. She liked the baby best. How inconsistent of Joe to make this call. He who railed at Lord John Manners and Mr. Smythe, and accused them of insolence in calling on me.

I send the *Examiner*. Let me hear from you soon, and believe me, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 580

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *July 26th*, 1852.

DEAR ELLEN,—I return Mrs. T. H.'s letter. It is the language of happiness which dares not trust itself to full expression. A kind of suppressed buoyancy is obvious throughout.

I should not have written to you to-day by choice ; lately I have again been harassed with headache, the heavy electric

atmosphere oppresses me much, yet I am less miserable just now than I was a little while ago. A severe shock came upon me about papa. He was suddenly attacked with acute inflammation of the eye. Mr. Ruddock was sent for, and after he had examined him, he called me into another room, and said papa's pulse was bounding at 150 per minute, that there was a strong pressure of blood upon the brain, that in short the symptoms were decidedly apoplectic.

Active measures were immediately taken, by the next day the pulse was reduced to 90. Thank God he is now better, though not well. The eye is a good deal inflamed. He does not know his state, to tell him he had been in danger of apoplexy would almost be to kill him at once, it would increase the rush to the brain and perhaps bring about rupture; he is kept very quiet.

Dear Nell, you will excuse a short note. Write again soon, tell me all concerning yourself that can relieve you.—Yours faithfully,  
C. B.

### Letter 581

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

July 28th, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—Is it in contemplation to publish the new edition of *Shirley* soon? Would it not be better to defer it for a time? In reference to a part of your letter, permit me to express this wish—and I trust in so doing I shall not be regarded as stepping out of my position as an author, and encroaching on the arrangements of business—viz. that no announcement of a new work by the author of *Jane Eyre* shall be made till the MS. of such work is actually in my publisher's hands. Perhaps we are none of us justified in speaking very decidedly where the future is concerned; but for some too much caution in such calculations can scarcely be observed: amongst this number I must class myself. Nor in doing so can I assume an apologetic tone. He does right who does his best.

Last autumn I got on for a time quickly. I ventured to look forward to spring as the period of publication: my health gave way; I passed such a winter as, having been once experienced, will never be forgotten. The spring proved little better than a protraction of trial. The warm weather and a visit to the sea have done me much good physically; but as yet I have recovered



neither elasticity of animal spirits nor flow of the power of composition. And if it were otherwise the difference would be of no avail; my time and thoughts are at present taken up with close attendance on my father, whose health is just now in a very critical state, the heat of the weather having produced determination of blood to the head.—I am, yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 582

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*August 3rd, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I write a line to say that papa is now considered out of danger, his progress to health is not without relapse, but I think he gains ground, if slowly, surely. Mr. Ruddock says the seizure was quite of an apoplectic character; there was partial paralysis for two days, but the mind remained clear, in spite of a high degree of nervous irritation. One eye still remains inflamed, and papa is weak, but all muscular affection is gone, and the pulse is accurate. One cannot be too thankful that papa's sight is yet spared, it was the fear of losing that which chiefly distressed him.

With best wishes for yourself, dear Ellen, I am, yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

My headaches are better. I have needed no help, but I thank you sincerely for your kind offers.

## Letter 583

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*HAWORTH, August 5th, '52.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am thankful to say that papa's convalescence seems now to be quite confirmed. There is scarcely any remainder of the inflammation in his eyes. He begins even to look forward to resuming his duty ere long, but caution must be observed on that head.

Martha has been very willing and helpful during papa's illness. Poor Tabby is ill herself at present, with English cholera, which with influenza has been almost universally prevalent in this district; I have myself had a touch of the last, but it went off

very gently on the whole, affecting my chest and liver less than any cold has done for the last three years.

I write to you about yourself rather under constraint and in the dark, for your letters, dear Ellen, are most remarkably oracular, dropping nothing but hints; which tie my tongue a good deal. Your last postscript is quite Sybilline. I can hardly guess what checks you in writing to me. There is certainly no one in this house or elsewhere to whom I should show your notes, and I do not imagine they are in any peril in passing through the post.

Perhaps you think that as *I* generally write with some reserve, you ought to do the same. *My* reserve, however, has its foundation not in design, but in necessity. I am silent because I have literally *nothing to say*. I might indeed repeat over and over again that my life is a pale blank and often a very weary burden, and that the Future sometimes appals me; but what end could be answered by such repetition except to weary you and enervate myself?

The evils that now and then wring a groan from my heart, lie in position; not that I am a *single* woman and likely to remain a *single* woman, but because I am a *lonely* woman and likely to be *lonely*. But it cannot be helped and therefore *imperatively must be borne*, and borne too with as few words about it as may be.

I write all this just to prove to you that whatever you would freely *say* to me, you may just as freely write.

Understand, I remain just as resolved as ever not to allow myself the holiday of a visit from you, *till* I have done my work. After labour, pleasure; but while work is lying at the wall undone, I never yet could enjoy recreation.—Yours very faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 584

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *August 12th*, 1852.

DEAR ELLEN,—Papa has varied occasionally since I wrote to you last. Monday was a very bad day, his spirits sunk painfully. Tuesday and yesterday however were much better, and to-day he seems wonderfully well. The prostration of spirits which accom-

panies anything like a relapse, is almost the most difficult point to manage. Dear Nell, you are tenderly kind in offering your society; but rest very tranquil where you are; be fully assured that it is not now, nor under present circumstances, that I feel the lack either of society or occupation; my time is pretty well filled up, and my thoughts appropriated.

Mr. Ruddock now seems quite satisfied there is no present danger whatever; he says papa has an excellent constitution and may live many years yet, the true balance is not yet restored to the circulation, but I believe that impetuous and dangerous termination to the head is quite obviated. I cannot permit myself to comment much on the chief contents of your last; advice is not necessary: as far as I can judge, you seem hitherto enabled to take these trials in a good and wise spirit. I can only pray that such combined strength and resignation may be continued to you. Submission, courage, exertion, when practicable—these seem to be the weapons with which we must fight life's long battle.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 585

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*Friday, 1852.*

DEAR NELL,—I did not think you would at all expect to hear from me again till you got home; so little as I have to communicate, it did not seem to me worth while to write.

I do hope and believe the changes you have been having this summer will do you permanent good, notwithstanding the pain with which they have been too often mingled. Yet I feel glad that you are soon coming home; and I really must not trust myself to say how much I wish the time were come when, without let or hindrance, I could once more welcome you to Haworth. But oh! I don't get on; I feel fettered, incapable, sometimes very low. However, at present, the subject must not be dwelt upon; it presses me too hardly, wearily, painfully. Less than ever can I taste or know pleasure till this work is wound up. And yet I often sit up in bed at night, thinking of and wishing for you. Thank you for the *Times*; what it said on the mighty and mournful subject was *well* said. All at once the whole nation seems to take a just view of that great character [the Duke of Wellington]. There was a review too of an American book, which

I was glad to see. Read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: probably, though, you have read it.

Papa's health continues satisfactory, thank God! As for me, my wretched liver has been disordered again of late, but I hope it is now going to be on better behaviour; it hinders me in working, depresses both power and tone of feeling. I must expect this derangement from time to time.

Write as soon as you can. I hope this letter will reach you before you leave town. Good-bye.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Your hint about Mrs. Gorham does not in the least surprise me. I felt sure that alone you would not be so comfortable. Mary Gorham is a genuine pearl of pure water.

## Letter 586

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *September 2nd*, 1852.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I have delayed answering your very kind letter till I could speak decidedly respecting papa's health. For some weeks after the attack there were frequent variations, and once a threatening of a relapse, but I trust his convalescence may now be regarded as confirmed. The acute inflammation of the eye, which distressed papa so much as threatening loss of sight, but which I suppose was merely symptomatic of the rush of blood to the brain, is now quite subsided; the partial paralysis has also disappeared; the appetite is better; weakness with occasional slight giddiness seem now the only lingering traces of disease. I am assured that with papa's excellent constitution, there is every prospect of his still being spared to me for many years.

For two things I have reason to be most thankful, viz. that the mental faculties have remained quite untouched, and also that my own health and strength have been found sufficient for the occasion. Solitary as I certainly was at Filey, I yet derived great benefit from the change.

It would be pleasant at the seaside this fine warm weather, and I should dearly like to be there with you; to such a treat, however, I do not now look forward at all. You will fully understand the impossibility of my enjoying peace of mind



during absence from papa under present circumstances; his strength must be very much more fully restored before I can think of leaving home.

My dear Miss Wooler, in case you should go to Scarbro' this season, may I request you to pay one visit to the churchyard and see if the inscription on the stone has been altered as I directed. We have heard nothing since on the subject, and I fear the alteration may have been neglected.

Ellen has made a long stay in the south, but I believe she will soon return now, and I am looking forward to the pleasure of having her company in the autumn.

With kind regards to all old friends, and sincere love to yourself,—I am, my dear Miss Wooler, yours affectionately and respectfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 587

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

September 9th, 1852.

DEAR ELLEN,—I did not send the *Examiner* last week, not knowing how to address; I send it however this week as usual.

Thank you for Ann's notes, I like to read them, they are so full of news, but they are illegible, a great many words I really cannot make out. It is pleasing to hear that Mercy is doing so well, and the tidings about your mother seem also good. What she said about 'mending her *manners*' when Ellen came home made me laugh.

Papa continues pretty well, but his spirits often flag, and he complains much of weakness.

I get a note from Hunsworth every now and then, but I fear my last reply has not given much satisfaction; it contained a taste of that unpalatable commodity called *advice*, such advice too as might be, and I dare say was, construed into faint reproof.

I can scarcely tell what there is about Amelia that in spite of one's conviction of her amiability, in spite of one's sincere wish for her welfare, palls upon one, satiates, stirs impatience. She *will* complacently put forth opinions and tastes as her own, which are *not her own*, nor in any sense natural to her. She pretentiously talks Taylorism with a Ringrose air and voice. My patience can

really hardly sustain the test of such a jay in borrowed plumes. She prated so much about the fine wilful spirit of her child, whom she describes as a hard brown little thing who will do nothing but what pleases herself, that I hit out at last, not very hard, but enough to make her think herself ill-used, I doubt not. Can't help it. She often says she is not 'absorbed in self,' but the fact is, I have seldom seen any one more unconsciously, thoroughly, and often weakly egotistic. Then too she is inconsistent. In the same breath she boasts her matrimonial happiness and whines for sympathy. Don't understand it. With a paragon of a husband and child, why that whining, craving note? Either her lot is not all she professes it to be, or she is hard to content. The fact is she makes me a little savage. How does she write to you? Answer soon and believe me, yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

If you be waited on by lady's-maids you'll have to pay them—for which reason I refuse.

## Letter 588

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *September 21st, 1852.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I was truly sorry to hear that when Ellen called at the Parsonage you were suffering from influenza. I know that an attack of this debilitating complaint is no trifle in your case, as its effects linger with you long. It has been very prevalent in this neighbourhood. I did not escape, but the sickness and fever only lasted a few days and the cough was not severe. Papa, I am thankful to say, continues pretty well; Ellen thinks him little, if at all altered.

And now for your kind present. The book will be precious to me—chiefly, perhaps, for the sake of the giver, but also for its own sake, for it is a good book; and I wish I may be enabled to read it with some approach to the spirit you would desire. Its perusal came recommended in such a manner as to obviate danger of neglect; its place shall always be on my dressing-table.

As to the other part of the present, it arrived under these circumstances:

For a month past an urgent necessity to buy and make some things for winter-wear had been importuning my conscience; the *buying* might be soon effected, but the *making* was a more

serious consideration. At this juncture Ellen arrives with a good-sized parcel, which, when opened, disclosed the things I required, perfectly made and of capital useful fabric; adorned too—which seemingly decoration it is but too probable I might myself have foregone as an augmentation of trouble not to be lightly incurred. I felt strong doubts as to my right to profit by this sort of fairy gift, so unlooked for and so curiously opportune; on reading the note accompanying the garments, I am told that to accept will be to confer a favour (!) The doctrine is too palatable to be rejected; I even waive all nice scrutiny of its soundness—in short, I submit with as good a grace as may be.

Ellen has only been my companion one little week. I would not have her any longer, for I am disgusted with myself and my delays, and consider it was a weak yielding to temptation in me to send for her at all; but, in truth, my spirits were getting low—prostrate sometimes, and she has done me inexpressible good. I wonder when I shall see you at Haworth again. Both my father and the servants have again and again insinuated a distinct wish that you should be requested to come in the course of the summer and autumn, but I always turned a deaf ear: ‘Not yet,’ was my thought, ‘I want first to be free—work first, then pleasure.’

I venture to send by Ellen a book which may amuse an hour: a Scotch tale by a minister’s wife. It seems to me well told, and may serve to remind you of characters and manners you have seen in Scotland. When you have time to write a line, I shall feel anxious to hear how you are. With kind regards to all old friends, and truest affection to yourself, in which Ellen joins me,—I am, my dear Miss Wooler, yours gratefully and respectfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 589

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*October 5th, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I must write a line to accompany the two letters which I return with thanks. Mary’s is very pleasant and cheerful. I hope you are safe at home by this time. Write very soon and tell me how you are, and how you found all.

Dear Nell, you know very well I should as soon think of going to the moon as of setting off to Brookroyd at present; no, I trust when we meet it will be at Haworth.

Mr. and Mrs. Forster<sup>1</sup> made another of their sudden calls here yesterday. They came in a fly in the midst of dreadful drenching weather. A lady accompanied them, a Miss Dixon from Dublin; it seems there is some distant connection between her family and that of the Birmingham Dixons, but they have no personal intercourse. They wanted to take me back with them; of course, vainly. Papa and I are both under pressure of colds at present. I was very uneasy about papa on Sunday, but I trust he is better now; so I think am I. Do you escape pretty well?

I send the newspapers. Write soon.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 590

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*October 9th, 1852.*

DEAR NELL,—Papa expresses so strong a wish that I should ask you to come, and I feel some little refreshment so absolutely necessary myself, that I really must beg you to come to Haworth for one single week. I thought I would persist in denying myself till I had done my work, but I find it won't do, the matter refuses to progress, and this excessive solitude presses too heavily, so let me see your dear face just for one reviving week.

Could you come on Wednesday? Write and let me know by what train you would reach Keighley, that I may send for you.

I am right glad that you keep up your courage so nobly, how much better, how much wiser than to sink in bodily and mental weakness. The effort will have its reward.

We will leave all other matters to talk about.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 591

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*Tuesday, October 26th, '52.*

DEAR NELL,—Your note came only this morning, I had expected it yesterday and was beginning actually to feel uneasy,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. E. Forster (1819-1886), the statesman and educationalist, married a daughter of Dr. Arnold in 1850. Mrs. Forster, in a letter to the editor, regretted that she had kept none of Miss Brontë's letters.



like you. This won't do, I am afraid of caring for you too much.

You must have come upon Hunsworth at an unfavourable moment; seen it under a cloud. Surely they are not often thus, or else married life is indeed but a slipshod paradise. I am glad, however, that the child is, as we conjectured, pretty well.

Miss Wooler's note is indeed kind, good, and characteristic.

I only send the *Examiner*, not having yet read the *Leader*. I was spared the remorse I feared. On Saturday I fell to business, and as the welcome mood is still decently existent, and my eyes consequently excessively tired with scribbling, you must excuse a mere scrawl. You left your smart shoes. Papa was glad to hear you had got home well, as well as myself. Regards to all. Good-bye.

—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

I do miss my dear companion. No more of that calm sleep.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## THE WRITING OF 'VILLETTE'

THE morbid atmosphere that she had breathed during the months prior to the publication of *Villette* led Charlotte Brontë into a feverish uncertainty as to the views of her publishers upon that book. A few hours' delay in a letter and she would have rushed up to London to call upon her Cornhill friends.

## Letter 592

TO GEORGE SMITH

October 30th, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—You must notify honestly what you think of *Villette* when you have read it. I can hardly tell you how I hunger to hear some opinion beside my own, and how I have sometimes desponded, and almost despaired, because there was no one to whom to read a line, or of whom to ask a counsel. *Jane Eyre* was not written under such circumstances, nor were two-thirds of *Shirley*. I got so miserable about it, I could bear no allusion to the book. It is not finished yet; but now I hope. As to the anonymous publication, I have this to say: If the withholding of the author's name should tend materially to injure the publisher's interest, to interfere with booksellers' orders, etc., I would not press the point; but if no such detriment is contingent I should be much thankful for the sheltering shadow of an incognito. I seem to dread the advertisements—the large-lettered 'Currer Bell's New Novel,' or 'New Work by the Author of *Jane Eyre*.' These, however, I feel well enough, are the transcendentalisms of a retired wretch; so you must speak frankly. . . . I shall be glad to see *Colonel Esmond*. My objection to the second volume lay here: I thought it contained decidedly too much History—too little Story.

You will see that *Villette* touches on no matter of public interest. I cannot write books handling the topics of the day; it is of no use trying. Nor can I write a book for its moral. Nor can I take up a philanthropic scheme, though I honour philanthropy; and voluntarily and sincerely veil my face before such a mighty subject as that handled in Mrs. Beecher Stowe's work, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. To manage these great matters rightly they must be long and practically studied—their bearings known intimately, and their evils felt genuinely; they must not be taken up as a business matter and a trading speculation. I doubt not Mrs. Stowe had felt the iron of slavery enter into her heart, from childhood upwards, long before she ever thought of writing books. The feeling throughout her work is sincere and not got up. Remember to be an honest critic of *Villette*, and tell Mr. Williams to be unsparing: not that I am likely to alter anything, but I want to know his impressions and yours.

## Letter 593

TO GEORGE SMITH

November 3rd, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—I feel very grateful for your letter; it relieved me much, for I was a good deal harassed by doubts as to how *Villette* might appear in other eyes than my own. I feel in some degree authorised to rely on your favourable impressions, because you are quite right where you hint disapprobation. You have exactly hit two points at least where I was conscious of defect—the discrepancy, the want of perfect harmony, between Graham's boyhood and manhood—the angular abruptness of his change of sentiment towards Miss Fanshawe. You must remember, though, that in secret he had for some time appreciated that young lady at a somewhat depressed standard—held her a *little* lower than the angels. But still the reader ought to have been better made to feel this preparation towards a change of mood. As to the publishing arrangements, I leave them to Cornhill. There is, undoubtedly, a certain force in what you say about the inexpediency of affecting a mystery which cannot be sustained; so you must act as you think is for the best. I submit, also, to the advertisements in large letters, but under protest, and with a kind of ostrich longing for concealment. Most of the third volume is given to the development of the 'crabbed Professor's' character

Lucy must not marry Dr. John ; he is far too youthful, handsome, bright-spirited, and sweet-tempered ; he is a 'curled darling' of Nature and of Fortune, and must draw a prize in life's lottery. His wife must be young, rich, pretty ; he must be made very happy indeed. If Lucy marries anybody it must be the Professor—a man in whom there is much to forgive, much to 'put up with.' But I am not leniently disposed towards Miss *Frost* ;<sup>1</sup> from the beginning I never meant to appoint her lines in pleasant places. The conclusion of this third volume is still a matter of some anxiety : I can but do my best, however. It would speedily be finished, could I ward off certain obnoxious headaches, which whenever I get into the spirit of my work, are apt to seize and prostrate me. . . .

Colonel Henry Esmond is just arrived. He looks very antique and distinguished in his Queen Anne's garb ; the periwig, sword, lace, and ruffles are very well represented by the old *Spectator* type.

C. BRONTË.

In 1848 Thackeray sent Miss Brontë, as we have seen, a copy of *Vanity Fair*. In this year he sent her, through Mr. George Smith, a copy of *Esmond*, with the more cordial inscription which came of friendship.

Miss Brontë.

with Wm Thackeray's grateful regards.

October 28. 1852.

## Letter 594

TO GEORGE SMITH

HAWORTH.

The third volume seemed to me to possess the most sparkle, impetus, and interest. Of the first and second my judgment was that parts of them were admirable ; but there was the fault of containing too much History—too little Story. I hold that a

<sup>1</sup> In the original manuscript, in the possession of Mrs. George Smith, 'Lucy Frost' may be seen with the name of 'Frost' erased and 'Snowe' substituted.



work of fiction ought to be a work of creation: that the *real* should be sparingly introduced in pages dedicated to the *ideal*. Plain household bread is a far more wholesome and necessary thing than cake; yet who would like to see the brown loaf placed upon the table for dessert? In the second volume the author gives us an ample supply of excellent brown bread; in his third, only such a portion as gives substance, like the crumbs of bread in a well-made, not too rich, plum-pudding. C. BRONTË.

## Letter 595

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*October 31st, 1852.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Mrs. Upjohn's letter, which I return, interested me a good deal. It reads like the production of a warmhearted, good-natured woman. There is a sort of vivacity of temperament and feeling about it which seems to have had genuineness to survive such a catalogue of afflictions as rarely fall in succession on one human being. Poor woman! she has been sorely tried.

Her proposal to you is peculiar. If I rightly understood it, it amounts to this. That you should go and spend some time with her, that if the result was mutually satisfactory, she would wish in a sense to adopt you, with the prospect of leaving you property, amount of course indefinite. Her affectionate remembrance, which has suggested this idea, says much both to your credit and hers. It seems to me that the visit should be made; if not now, as you have so lately been from home, yet next Spring, and this is all (I think) you are now called upon to decide; the rest may be left for future consideration. After your visit your way will be clearer. I cannot help wishing that something permanently advantageous to you may spring from this incident. Yet it is a case which presents difficulties. To leave your own home and mother for the society of two elderly invalids is a step demanding caution.

I have just got a letter from New Zealand, which I enclose; it made me sad. I cannot help earnestly wishing that Mary were back in England if one could see an opening for making her way. Give my love to your mother and believe me, dear Nell,—Yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 596

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

November 6th, 1852.

MY DEAR SIR,—I must not delay thanking you for your kind letter, with its candid and able commentary on *Villette*. With many of your strictures I concur. The third volume may, perhaps, do away with some of the objections; others still remain in force. I do not think the interest culminates anywhere to the degree you would wish. What climax there is does not come on till near the conclusion; and even then I doubt whether the regular novel-reader will consider the 'agony piled sufficiently high' (as the Americans say), or the colours dashed on to the canvas with the proper amount of daring. Still, I fear, they must be satisfied with what is offered; my palette affords no brighter tints; were I to attempt to deepen the reds, or burnish the yellows, I should but botch.

Unless I am mistaken the emotion of the book will be found to be kept throughout in tolerable subjection. As to the name of the heroine, I can hardly express what subtlety of thought made me decide upon giving her a cold name; but at first I called her 'Lucy Snowe' (spelt with an 'e'), which Snowe I afterwards changed to 'Frost.' Subsequently I rather regretted the change, and wished it 'Snowe' again. If not too late I should like the alteration to be made now throughout the MS. A cold name she must have; partly, perhaps, on the '*lucus a non lucendo*' principle—partly on that of the 'fitness of things,' for she has about her an external coldness.

You say that she may be thought morbid and weak, unless the history of her life be more fully given. I consider that she *is* both morbid and weak at times; her character sets up no pretensions to unmixed strength, and anybody living her life would necessarily become morbid. It was no impetus of healthy feeling which urged her to the confessional, for instance; it was the semi-delirium of solitary grief and sickness. If, however, the book does not express all this, there must be a great fault somewhere. I might explain away a few other points, but it would be too much like drawing a picture and then writing underneath the name of the object intended to be represented. We know what sort of a pencil that is which needs an ally in the pen.

Thanking you again for the clearness and fulness with which

you have responded to my request for a statement of impressions,  
I am, my dear sir, yours very sincerely, C. BRONTË.

I trust the work will be seen in MS. by no one except Mr. Smith and yourself.

## Letter 597

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*November 10th, 1852.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I only wished the publication of *Shirley* to be delayed till *Villette* was nearly ready; to that there can now be no objection to its being issued whenever you think fit. About putting the MS. into type I can only say that, should I be able to proceed with the third volume at my average rate of composition, and with no more than the average amount of interruptions, I should hope to have it ready in about three weeks. I leave it to you to decide whether it would be better to delay the printing that space of time, or to commence it immediately. It would certainly be more satisfactory if you were to see the third volume before printing the first and the second; yet, if delay is likely to prove injurious, I do not think it is indispensable. I have read the third volume of *Esmond*. I found it both entertaining and exciting to me; it seems to possess an impetus and excitement beyond the other two; that movement and brilliancy its predecessors sometimes wanted never fail here. In certain passages I thought Thackeray used all his powers; their grand, serious force yielded a profound satisfaction. 'At last he puts forth his strength,' I could not help saying to myself. No character in the book strikes me as more masterly than that of Beatrix; its conception is fresh, and its delineation vivid. It is peculiar; it has impressions of a new kind—new, at least, to me. Beatrix is not, in herself, all bad. So much does she sometimes reveal of what is good and great as to suggest this feeling; you would think she was urged by a Fate. You would think that some antique doom presses on her house, and that once in so many generations its brightest ornament was to become its greatest disgrace. At times what is good in her struggles against this terrible destiny, but the Fate conquers. Beatrix cannot be an honest woman and a good man's wife. She 'tries and she cannot.' Proud, beautiful, and sullied, she was born what she becomes, a king's mistress. I know not whether you have seen the notice in the *Leader*; I read

it just after concluding the book. Can I be wrong in deeming it a notice tame, cold, and insufficient? With all its professed friendliness it produced on me a most disheartening impression. Surely another sort of justice than this will be rendered to *Esmond* from other quarters. One acute remark of the critic is to the effect that Blanche Amory and Beatrix are identical—sketched from the same original! To me they are about as identical as a weasel and a royal tigress of Bengal; both the latter are quadrupeds, both the former women. But I must not take up either your time or my own with further remarks.—Believe me yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 598

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*Nov. 29th, 1852, Monday Morning.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Truly thankful am I to be able to tell you that I finished my long task<sup>1</sup> on Saturday; packed and sent off the parcel to Cornhill. I said my prayers when I had done it. Whether it is well or ill done, I don't know. D.V. I will now try to wait the issue quietly. The book, I think, will not be considered pretentious, nor is it of a character to excite hostility.

As papa is pretty well, I may, I think, dear Nell, do as you wish me and come for a few days to Brookroyd. Miss Martineau has also urgently asked me to go and see her. I promised if all were well to do so, the close of November or beginning of December. So that I could go from Brookroyd to Westmoreland. Would Wednesday suit you? I should leave Keighley by the 2 o'clock train—reach Bradford by 20 minutes after 2. I should get to Heckmondwike by 8 minutes past 3. Thence, if it were not convenient to send the gig to meet me, I would walk, and get my luggage sent on. Whether would it be better to stop at Heckmondwike or Liversedge?

*Esmond* shall come with me, that is, Thackeray's novel. Yours in cruel haste,

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 599

TO GEORGE SMITH

*December 6th, 1852.*

MY DEAR SIR,—The receipts have reached me safely. I received the first on Saturday, enclosed in a cover without a line, and had

<sup>1</sup> *Villette.*



made up my mind to take the train on Monday, and go up to London to see what was the matter, and what had struck my publisher mute. On Sunday morning your letter came, and you have thus been spared the visitation of the unannounced and unsummoned apparition of Currer Bell in Cornhill. Inexplicable delays should be avoided when possible, for they are apt to urge those subjected to their harassment to sudden and impulsive steps.

I must pronounce you right again, in your complaint of the transfer of interest in the third volume from one set of characters to another. It is not pleasant, and it will probably be found as unwelcome to the reader as it was, in a sense, compulsory upon the writer. The spirit of romance would have indicated another course, far more flowery and inviting; it would have fashioned a paramount hero, kept faithfully with him, and made him supremely worshipful; he should have an idol, and not a mute, unresponding idol either; but this would have been unlike real life—inconsistent with truth—at variance with probability. I greatly apprehend, however, that the weakest character in the book is the one I aimed at making the most beautiful; and, if this be the case, the fault lies in its wanting the germ of the *real*—in its being purely imaginary. I felt that this character lacked substance; I fear that the reader will feel the same. Union with it resembles too much the fate of Ixion, who was mated with a cloud. The childhood of Paulina is, however, I think, pretty well imagined, but her . . . [the remainder of this interesting sentence is torn off the letter]. A brief visit to London becomes thus more practicable, and if your mother will kindly write, when she has time, and name a day after Christmas which will suit her, I shall have pleasure, papa's health permitting, in availing myself of her invitation. I wish I could come in time to correct some at least of the proofs; it would save trouble.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 600

TO MISS WOOLER

BROOKROYD, *December 7th*, 1852.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—Since you were so kind as to take some interest in my small tribulation of Saturday, I write a line to tell you that on Sunday morning a letter came which put me

out of pain and obviated the necessity of an impromptu journey to London.

The *money transaction*, of course, remains the same, and perhaps is not quite equitable; but when an author finds that his work is cordially approved, he can pardon the rest—indeed, my chief regret now lies in the conviction that papa will be disappointed: he expected me to earn £750, nor did I myself anticipate that a lower sum would be offered; however, £500 is not to be despised.

Your sudden departure from Brookroyd left a legacy of consternation to the bereaved breakfast-table. Ellen was not easily to be soothed, though I diligently represented to her that you had quitted Haworth with the same inexorable haste. I am commissioned to tell you, first, that she has decided not to go to Yarmouth till after Christmas, her mother's health having within the last few days betrayed some symptoms not unlike those which preceded her former illness; and though it is to be hoped that these may pass without any untoward result, yet they naturally increase Ellen's reluctance to leave home for the present.

Secondly, I am to say, that when the present you left came to be examined, the costliness and beauty of it inspired some concern. Ellen thinks you are too kind, as I also think every morning, for I am now benefiting by your kind gift.

With sincere regards to all at the Parsonage, and especially thanks to Mr. C—— as a friend who, having temporarily been lost, is again found,—I am, my dear Miss Wooler, yours respectfully and affectionately,

C. BRONTË.

*P.S.*—I shall direct that *Esmond* (Mr. Thackeray's work) shall be sent on to you as soon as the Hunsworth party have read it. It has already reached a second edition.

## Letter 601

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*Dec. 9th, 1852, Thursday Morning.*

DEAR NELL,—I got home safely at five o'clock yesterday afternoon, and, I am most thankful to say, found papa and all the rest well. I did my business satisfactorily in Leeds, the head-dress re-arranged as I wish; it is now a very different matter to the bushy, tasteless thing it was before.

On my arrival I found no proof-sheets, but a letter from Mr. Smith, which I would have enclosed, but so many words are scarcely legible, you would have no pleasure in reading it: he continues to make a mystery of his 'reason'—something in the third volume sticks confoundedly in his throat, and as to the 'female character' about which I asked, he responds crabbedly that, 'She is an odd, fascinating little puss,' but affirms that he is 'not in love with her.' He tells me also that he will answer no more questions about *Villette*.

This morning I have a brief note from Mr. Williams intimating that he has 'not yet been permitted to read the 3rd vol.' Also there is a note from Mrs. Smith, very kind, I almost wish I could still look on that kindness just as I used to do: it was very pleasant to me once.

Write *immediately*, Dear Nell, and tell me how your mother is. Give my kindest regards to her and all at Brookroyd. Everybody was very good to me this last visit, I remember them with corresponding pleasure. Papa seems glad on the whole to hear you are not going to Yarmouth just yet; he thinks you should be cautious.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

I enclose a postage stamp for the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. you were to pay for me at the station. Don't forget it.

## CHAPTER XXIX

ARTHUR BELL NICHOLLS

WITHOUT the kindly assistance of the late Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls, this collection of letters could never have been prepared. To him I owe a debt of gratitude in that he placed in my hands a multitude of documents that may never otherwise have seen the light. There are, however, no painful secrets to reveal, no skeletons to lay bare. Mr. Nicholls's story was a very simple one; and that it was entirely creditable to him, there is abundant evidence. Amid the full discussion to which the lives of the Brontës have necessarily been subjected through their ever-continuous fame, it was perhaps inevitable that a contrary opinion should gain ground. Many of Mr. Nicholls's relatives in Ireland were wont to sigh over the perverted statements which obtained currency. 'It is cruel that your uncle Arthur, the best of men, as we know, should be thus treated,' was the comment of Mr. Nicholls's brother to his daughter after reading an unfriendly article concerning Charlotte's husband. Yet it was not unnatural that such an estimate should get abroad; and I may frankly admit that until I met Mr. Nicholls I believed that Charlotte Brontë's marriage had been an unhappy one—an opinion gathered partly from Mrs. Gaskell, partly from current tradition in Yorkshire. Mrs. Gaskell, in fact, did not like Mr. Nicholls, and there were those with whom she came in contact while writing Miss Brontë's *Life* who were eager to fan that feeling in the usually kindly biographer.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Nicholls himself did not

<sup>1</sup> The following letter from Mrs. Gaskell to Mr. W. Smith Williams, dated 46





*Arthur Bell Nicholls*  
*From a photograph made about 1861*

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work in the direction of conciliation. He was, as we know, a Scotsman, and Scots taciturnity brought to bear upon the genial and jovial Yorkshire folk did not make for friendliness. Furthur, he would not let Mrs. Gaskell 'edit' and change *The Professor*. He hated publicity, and above all things viewed the attempt to pierce the veil of his married life with almost morbid detestation.

Mr. Nicholls was born in Co. Antrim in 1817, but of Scots parents on both sides. His actual name was Nicoll. He was left at the age of seven to the charge of an uncle—the Rev. Alan Bell—who was headmaster of the Royal School at Banagher, in King's Co. Mr. Nicholls afterwards entered Trinity College, Dublin, and it was thence

Plymouth Grove, December 20th, 1860, is one of many documentary indications of this that are in my possession :—

MY DEAR SIR,—When I was abroad this summer, I was introduced to a Miss Burnett, who asked me for an introduction to Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., with a view to the publication of an MS. which she had then in hand. The other day she wrote to claim the fulfilment of my promise; and I have thought it best to perform it by writing direct to yourself, as I have been sending Mr. Smith lately so many similar introductions that I have some scruples in troubling him further in that way. Besides you have always been so kind to me, however and whenever I have applied to you, that I think you will forgive me, if my bringing this MS. under your notice should uselessly waste your time.

We had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Lowes Dickinson last Saturday week, and a real pleasure it was to us. Mr. Gaskell missed his share, however, owing to his inevitable Saturday night's sermon, but we hope that Mr. Dickinson will come and see us again when he returns to Manchester, and then Mr. Gaskell will make up for lost time.

About six weeks ago I paid a visit to Mr. Brontë, and sat for about an hour with him. He is completely confined to bed now, but talks hopefully of leaving it again when the summer comes round. I am afraid that it will not be leaving it as he plans, poor old man! He is touchingly softened by illness; but still talks in his pompous way, and mingles moral remarks and somewhat stale sentiments with his conversation on ordinary subjects. Mr. Nicholls seems to keep him rather *in terrorem*. He is more unpopular in the village than ever; and seems to have even a greater aversion than formerly to any strangers visiting his wife's grave; or, indeed, to any reverence paid to her memory, even by those who knew and loved her for her own sake. He refused to christen Mr. Greenwood's last child when he heard that it was to be named 'Brontë' after her, and the child remained unchristened for six months in consequence, when its great delicacy coming to Mr. Brontë's knowledge, he sent for it privately and christened it in his own room. When Mr. Nicholls came upon its name upon the register book, Mr. Greenwood says that he stormed and stamped, and went straight home to the Parsonage to Mr. Brontë to ask him for his reasons in going so directly against his wishes. Fortunately Mr. Brontë had the excellent defence of saying that if the child had died unchristened Mr. Nicholls's case would have been extremely awkward, and that he had thus saved him from a great scrape.—Believe me yours most sincerely,

E. C. GASKELL.

that he went to Haworth, his first curacy. He succeeded a fellow-countryman, Mr. James William Smith, in 1844.

The first reference we have to Mr. Nicholls in Charlotte Brontë's letters is more favourable in its judgment than was that on his predecessors in the Haworth curacy. She writes to a Mrs. Rand, on May 26, 1844, a brief note of which I have not a copy, but its only important statement runs as follows:—‘Papa has got a new curate lately, a Mr. Nicholls, from Ireland—he did duty for the first time on Sunday—he appears a respectable young man, reads well, and I hope will give satisfaction.’ At a later date, however, she writes to her friend Ellen Nussey:—‘I cannot for my life see those interesting germs of goodness in him you discovered; his narrowness of mind always strikes me chiefly,’<sup>1</sup> but with the years came kindlier feelings until we have the description of him as Mr. Macarthey in *Shirley*, over which he laughed so heartily:—

Perhaps I ought to remark that, on the premature and sudden vanishing of Mr. Malone from the stage of Briarfield parish, . . . there came as his successor another Irish curate, Mr. Macarthey. I am happy to be able to inform you, *with truth*, that this gentleman did as much credit to his country as Malone had done it discredit; he proved himself as decent, decorous, and conscientious, as Peter was rampant, boisterous, and—(this last epithet I choose to suppress, because it would let the cat out of the bag). He laboured faithfully in the parish; the schools, both Sunday and day-schools, flourished under his sway like green bay-trees. Being human, of course he had his faults; these, however, were proper, steady-going, clerical faults: the circumstance of finding himself invited to tea with a dissenter would unhinge him for a week; the spectacle of a Quaker wearing his hat in the church, the thought of an unbaptized fellow-creature being interred with Christian rites—these things could make strange havoc in Mr. Macarthey's physical and mental economy: otherwise he was sane and rational, diligent and charitable.

Mr. Nicholls had been Mr. Brontë's curate for some

<sup>1</sup> Letter of October 2nd, 1844.



eight years before he proposed for his daughter's hand. The father's attitude was irreconcilably adverse. Long years afterwards Mr. Nicholls told me, in the midst of a vigorous defence of Mr. Brontë alike as father, as priest, and as friend, that he considered the aged, infirm incumbent of Haworth had much right on his side even in this passionate opposition. Mr. Nicholls held a curacy worth about £100 per annum. Charlotte had in a measure the world at her feet. She had already refused the vicar of Hathersage, and Mr. Taylor, a man of good status in London and Bombay. For this his only surviving daughter he had boundless ambition. Mrs. Gaskell tells us, moreover, that he always denounced marriage in the abstract. I prefer, however, here as always, that the letters should speak for themselves.

### Letter 602

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*December 15th, 1852.*

DEAR NELL,—I return Mrs. Upjohn's note which is highly characteristic, and not, I fear, of good omen for the comfort of your visit. There must be something wrong in herself as well as in her servants. I enclose another note which, taken in conjunction with the incident immediately preceding it, and with a long series of indications whose meaning I scarce ventured hitherto to interpret to myself, much less hint to any other, has left on my mind a feeling of deep concern. This note, you will see, is from Mr. Nicholls.

I know not whether you have ever observed him specially when staying here, your perception is generally quick enough, *too* quick I have sometimes thought, yet as you never said anything, I restrained my own dim misgivings, which could not claim the sure guide of vision. What papa has seen or guessed I will not inquire though I may conjecture. He has minutely noticed all Mr. Nicholls's low spirits, all his threats of expatriation, all his symptoms of impaired health, noticed them with little sympathy and much indirect sarcasm. On Monday evening Mr. Nicholls was here to tea. I vaguely felt without clearly seeing, as without seeing, I have felt for some time, the meaning of his constant

looks, and strange, feverish restraint. After tea I withdrew to the dining-room as usual. As usual, Mr. Nicholls sat with papa till between eight and nine o'clock, I then heard him open the parlour door as if going. I expected the clash of the front-door. He stopped in the passage: he tapped: like lightning it flashed on me what was coming. He entered, he stood before me. What his words were you can guess; his manner, you can hardly realise, nor can I forget it. Shaking from head to foot, looking deadly pale, speaking low, vehemently yet with difficulty, he made me for the first time feel what it costs a man to declare affection where he doubts response.

The spectacle of one ordinarily so statue-like, thus trembling, stirred, and overcome, gave me a kind of strange shock. He spoke of sufferings he had borne for months, of sufferings he could endure no longer, and craved leave for some hope. I could only entreat him to leave me then and promise a reply on the morrow. I asked him if he had spoken to papa. He said, he dared not. I think I half led, half put him out of the room. When he was gone I immediately went to papa, and told him what had taken place. Agitation and anger disproportionate to the occasion ensued; if I had *loved* Mr. Nicholls and had heard such epithets applied to him as were used, it would have transported me past my patience; as it was, my blood boiled with a sense of injustice, but papa worked himself into a state not to be trifled with, the veins on his temples started up like whipcord, and his eyes became suddenly bloodshot. I made haste to promise that Mr. Nicholls should on the morrow have a distinct refusal.

I wrote yesterday and got this note. There is no need to add to this statement any comment. Papa's vehement antipathy to the bare thought of any one thinking of me as a wife, and Mr. Nicholls's distress, both give me pain. Attachment to Mr. Nicholls you are aware I never entertained, but the poignant pity inspired by his state on Monday evening, by the hurried revelation of his sufferings for many months, is something galling and irksome. That he cared something for me, and wanted me to care for him, I have long suspected, but I did not know the degree or strength of his feelings. Dear Nell, good-bye.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

I have letters from Sir J. K. Shuttleworth and Miss Martineau, but I cannot talk of them now.

## Letter 603

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *December 18th*, '52.

DEAR NELL,—You may well ask, How is it? for I am sure I don't know. This business would seem to me like a dream, did not my reason tell me it has long been brewing. It puzzles me to comprehend how and whence comes this turbulence of feeling.

You ask how papa demeans himself to Mr. Nicholls. I only wish you were here to see papa in his present mood: you would know something of him. He just treats him with a hardness not to be bent, and a contempt not to be propitiated. The two have had no interview as yet: all has been done by letter. Papa wrote, I must say, a most cruel note to Mr. Nicholls on Wednesday. In his state of mind and health (for the poor man is horrifying his landlady, Martha's mother, by entirely rejecting his meals) I felt that the blow must be parried, and I thought it right to accompany the pitiless despatch by a line to the effect that, while Mr. Nicholls must never expect me to reciprocate the feeling he had expressed, yet at the same time I wished to disclaim participation in sentiments calculated to give him pain; and I exhorted him to maintain his courage and spirits. On receiving the two letters, he set off from home. Yesterday came the enclosed brief epistle.

You must understand that a good share of papa's anger arises from the idea, not altogether groundless, that Mr. Nicholls has behaved with disingenuousness in so long concealing his aim, forging that Irish fiction, etc. I am afraid also that papa thinks a little too much about his want of money; he says that the match would be a degradation, that I should be throwing myself away, that he expects me, if I marry at all, to do very differently; in short, his manner of viewing the subject is, on the whole, far from being one in which I can sympathise. My own objections arise from a sense of incongruity and uncongeniality in feelings, tastes, principles.

How are you getting on, dear Nell, and how are all at Brookroyd? Remember me kindly to everybody. Yours, wishing devoutly that papa would resume his tranquillity, and Mr. N. his beef and pudding,

C. BRONTË.

I am glad to say that the incipient inflammation in papa's eye is disappearing.

## Letter 604

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January 2nd, 1853.*

DEAR NELL,—I thought of you on New Year's night, and hope you got well over your formidable tea-making. I trust that Tuesday and Wednesday will also pass pleasantly. I am busy too in my little way, preparing to go to London this week, a matter which necessitates some little application to the needle. I find it is quite necessary I should go to superintend the press, as Mr. Smith seems quite determined not to let the printing get on till I come. I have actually only received three proof-sheets since I was at Brookroyd. Papa wants me to go too, to be out of the way, I suppose, but I am sorry for one other person whom nobody pities but me. Martha is bitter against him; John Brown says, 'he should like to shoot him.' They don't understand the nature of his feelings, but I see now what they are. He is one of those who attach themselves to very few, whose sensations are close and deep, like an underground stream, running strong, but in a narrow channel. He continues restless and ill, he carefully performs the occasional duty, but does not come near the church, procuring a substitute every Sunday. A few days since, he wrote to papa requesting permission to withdraw his resignation. Papa answered that he should only do so on condition of giving his written promise never again to broach the obnoxious subject either to him or to me. This he has evaded doing, so the matter remains unsettled. I feel persuaded the termination will be his departure for Australia. Dear Nell, without loving him, I don't like to think of him suffering in solitude, and wish him anywhere so that he were happier. He and papa have never met or spoken yet. I am very glad to learn that your mother is pretty well, and also that the piece of challenged work is progressing. I hope you will not be called away to Norfolk before I come home: I should like you to pay a visit to Haworth first. Write again soon.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.



## Letter 605

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

112 GLOUCESTER TERRACE,  
HYDE PARK, *January 11th, 1853.*

DEAR NELL,—I came here last Wednesday. I had a delightful day for my journey, and was kindly received at the close.

My time has passed pleasantly enough since I came, yet I have not much to tell you, nor is it likely I shall have; I do not mean to go out much or see many people. Sir J. K. Shuttleworth wrote to me two or three times before I left home, and made me promise to let him know when I should be in town, but I reserved to myself the right of deferring the communication till the latter part of my stay. I really so much dread his excited fuss, that I only wish to see just as much of him as civility exacts.

All in this house appear pretty much as usual and yet I see some changes. Mrs. Smith and her daughters are looking well, but on Mr. Smith hard work is telling early, the very lines of his features are altered; it is rather the remembrance of what he was than the fact of what he is which can warrant the picture I have been accustomed to give of him. One feels pained to see a physical alteration of this kind, yet I feel glad and thankful that it is merely physical; as far as I can judge, mind and manners have undergone no deterioration, rather, I think, the contrary. The weight of work bearing upon him is really fearful. In some of his notes to me I half suspected exaggeration; it was no exaggeration, far otherwise. Mr. Taylor is said to be getting on well in India.

No news from home, and I feel a little uneasy to hear how papa is. I left him well, but at his age one especially feels the uncertainty of health. Remember me affectionately to all at Brookroyd. Write again soon, and believe me, dear Nell, yours  
C. BRONTË.

I hope you enjoyed yourself at Mrs. B.'s. You must tell me how you got on.

## Letter 606

TO MRS. GASKELL

LONDON, *January 12th*, 1853.

It is with *you* the ball rests. I have not heard from you since I wrote last; but I thought I knew the reason of your silence, viz. application to work—and therefore I accept it, not merely with resignation, but with satisfaction.

I am now in London, as the date above will show; staying very quietly at my publisher's, and correcting proofs, etc. Before receiving yours I had felt, and expressed to Mr. Smith, reluctance to come in the way of *Ruth*; not that I think *she* would suffer from contact with *Villette*—we know not but that the damage might be the other way—but I have ever held comparisons to be odious, and would fain that neither I nor my friends should be made subjects for the same. Mr. Smith proposes, accordingly, to defer the publication of my book till the 24th inst.; he says that will give *Ruth* the start in the papers, daily and weekly, and also will leave free to her all the February magazines. Should this delay appear to you insufficient, speak! and it shall be protracted.

I dare say, arrange as we may, we shall not be able wholly to prevent comparisons; it is the nature of some critics to be invidious; but we need not care: we can set them at defiance; they *shall* not make us foes, they *shall* not mingle with our mutual feelings one taint of jealousy: there is my hand on that: I know you will give clasp for clasp.

*Villette* has indeed no right to push itself before *Ruth*. There is a goodness, a philanthropic purpose, a social use in the latter, to which the former cannot for an instant pretend; nor can it claim precedence on the ground of surpassing power: I think it much quieter than *Jane Eyre*.

I wish to see *you*, probably at least as much as you can wish to see *me*, and therefore shall consider your invitation for March as an engagement; about the close of that month, then, I hope to pay you a brief visit. With kindest remembrances to Mr. Gaskell and all your precious circle, I am, etc.,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 607

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

112 GLOUCESTER TERRACE, *January 19th, '53.*

DEAR NELL,—Mrs. H.'s letter I read with pleasure; it is so truly kind and friendly. I thank you for your brief account of the party. I can hardly tell what to say about Mr. Nicholls in a letter; it is a subject rather to talk than write about.

I still continue to get on very comfortably and quietly in London in the way I like, seeing rather things than persons. Being allowed to have my own choice of sights this time, I selected rather the *real* than the *decorative* side of life. I have been over two prisons, ancient and modern, Newgate and Pentonville, also the Bank, the Exchange, the Foundling Hospital, and to-day, if all be well, I go with Dr. Forbes to see Bethlehem Hospital. Mrs. Smith and her daughters are, I believe, a little amazed at my gloomy tastes, but I take no notice.

Papa, I am glad to say, continues well. I enclose portions of two notes of his which will show you, better than anything I can say, how he treats a certain subject: one of the notes purports to be written by Flossy! I think of staying here till next Wednesday. What are your present plans with regard to Mrs. Upjohn? You *must* if possible come to Haworth before you go into Norfolk.

My book is to appear at the close of this month. Mrs. Gaskell wrote so pitifully to beg it should not clash with her *Ruth*, that it was impossible to refuse to defer the publication a week or two.

I hope your mother continues pretty well, and also Ann, Mercy, and Mrs. Clapham. Give my best love to all. Is the work getting on? Write very soon, and believe me, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

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## CHAPTER XXX

## THE LAST NOVEL

THE publication of *Villette* in January 1853 once more placed Charlotte Brontë's name to the front among contemporary writers of fiction. A consensus of literary opinion now proclaims it to be her best book. It has been surmised<sup>1</sup> that Bretton is Burlington or Bridlington, the Yorkshire watering-place that Miss Brontë twice visited, and where she and her sister contemplated opening a school; but another topographical student of the Brontë novels<sup>2</sup> favours York as the place the author intended. *Villette* is of course Brussels, and the Pensionnat Héger looms important in the story. The Hôtel Crécý, the residence of M. de Bassompierre, is, Mr. Wroot thinks, the Hôtel Mengelle in the Rue Royale, formerly the Hôtel Cluysenaar. The Church of St. Jean Baptiste, whose bell was heard from the school, was the Church of St. Jacques-sur-Caudenberg, and the church of Lucy Snowe's confession was the Cathedral of Ste. Gudule. Brussels speaks at every point to the reader of this remarkable story. In intensity and dramatic feeling *Villette* puts all other 'novels of place' in the background.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By Mr. P. F. Lee, *Transactions of the Brontë Society*, part iv. pp. 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> *The Persons and Places of the Brontë Novels*, by Herbert E. Wroot. *Villette* and

<sup>2</sup> *The Professor*: Brontë Society Publications. Supplementary Part.

<sup>3</sup> Yet tourists wander about Rome with Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*, and about Florence with George Eliot's *Romola*. No one, I suppose, has carried *Villette* about Brussels.



## Letter 608

TO MISS WOOLER

*January 27th, 1853.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I received your letter here in London, where I have been staying about three weeks, and shall probably remain a few days longer. *Villette* is to be published to-morrow. Its appearance has been purposely delayed hitherto, to avoid discourteous clashing with Mrs. Gaskell's new work. Your name was one of the first on the list of presentees, and directed to the Parsonage, where I shall also send this letter, as you mention that you are to leave Halifax at the close of this week. I will bear in mind what you say about Mrs. Morgan; and should I ever have an opportunity of serving her, will not omit to do so. I only wish my chance of being useful were greater. Schools seem to be considered almost obsolete in London. Ladies' colleges, with professors for every branch of instruction, are superseding the old-fashioned seminary. How the system will work I can't tell. I think the college classes might be very useful for finishing the education of ladies intended to go out as governesses, but what progress little girls will make in them seems to me another question.

My dear Miss Wooler, I read attentively all you say about Miss Martineau; the sincerity and constancy of your solicitude touches me very much. I should grieve to neglect or oppose your advice, and yet I do not feel that it would be right to give Miss Martineau up entirely. There is in her nature much that is very noble. Hundreds have forsaken her, more, I fear, in the apprehension that their fair names may suffer if seen in connection with hers, than from any pure convictions, such as you suggest, of harm consequent on her fatal tenets. With these fair-weather friends I cannot bear to rank. And for her sin, is it not one of those which God and not man must judge?

To speak the truth, my dear Miss Wooler, I believe if you were in my place, and knew Miss Martineau as I do—if you had shared with me the proofs of her rough but genuine kindness, and had seen how she secretly suffers from abandonment, you would be the last to give her up; you would separate the sinner from the sin, and feel as if the right lay rather in quietly adhering to her in her strait, while that adherence is unfashionable and

unpopular, than in turning on her your back when the world sets the example. I believe she is one of those whom opposition and desertion make obstinate in error, while patience and tolerance touch her deeply and keenly, and incline her to ask of her own heart whether the course she has been pursuing may not possibly be a faulty course. However, I have time to think of this subject, and I shall think of it seriously.

As to what I have seen in London during my present visit, I hope one day to tell you all about it by our fireside at home. When you write again will you name a time when it would suit you to come and see me; everybody in the house would be glad of your presence; your last visit is pleasantly remembered by all.

With kindest regards,—I am always, affectionately and respectfully yours,  
C. BRONTË.

This eulogy of Miss Martineau, old-fashioned as it reads to-day, was soon followed by a reaction. After a review by her of the novel in the *Daily News* Charlotte Brontë's regard cooled very much. Miss Martineau had insisted that the book made love too general and too absorbing a factor in women's lives, and protested against the assumption that 'events and characters are to be regarded through the medium of one passion only.' I give together the three fragments of correspondence that remain of this quarrel, if quarrel it can be called, between the two.

## Letter 609

TO MISS HARRIET MARTINEAU

*January 21st, 1853.*

I know that you will give me your thoughts upon my book, as frankly as if you spoke to some near relative whose good you preferred to her gratification. I wince under the pain of condemnation, like any other weak structure of flesh and blood; but I love, I honour, I kneel to truth. Let her smite me on the one cheek—good! the tears may spring to the eyes; but courage! there is the other side; hit again, right sharply.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 610

TO MISS BRONTË

As for the other side of the question, which you so desire to know, I have but one thing to say ; but it is not a small one. I do not like the love, either the kind or the degree of it ; and its prevalence in the book, and effect on the action of it, help to explain the passages in the reviews which you consulted me about, and seem to afford *some* foundation for the criticisms they offered.

H. MARTINEAU.

Among Miss Brontë's papers I find the following letter to Miss Martineau, written with a not unnatural resentment after the publication of her review of *Shirley* in the *Daily News* :—

## Letter 611

TO MISS HARRIET MARTINEAU

MY DEAR MISS MARTINEAU,—I think I best show my sense of the tone and feeling of your last, by immediate compliance with the wish you express that I should send your letter. I enclose it, and have marked with red ink the passage which struck me dumb. All the rest is fair, right, worthy of you, but I protest against this passage ; and were I brought up before the bar of all the critics in England, to such a charge I should respond, 'Not guilty.'

I know what *love* is as I understand it ; and if man or woman should be ashamed of feeling such love, then is there nothing right, noble, faithful, truthful, unselfish in this earth, as I comprehend rectitude, nobleness, fidelity, truth, and disinterestedness.—Yours sincerely,

C. B.

To differ from you gives me keen pain.

Once more she writes from London to her most intimate friend.

## Letter 612

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

112 GLOUCESTER TERRACE,  
HYDE PARK, *January 28th, '53.*

DEAR NELL,—I have been longing to write to you every day this week and have not been able, my time is much taken up. In the three hours of leisure afforded me this morning I have four letters to write and therefore must be brief. I have got the parcel of books for you. Ed. and G. brought it *in propria persona*, and I saw them. . . . Next day Madame herself called, very stately in her carriage. I was not in, and the next day came a note asking me to dine in Cleveland Row on Tuesday next. I declined dinner, but promised to call to-morrow morning, which D.V. I hope to do.

Don't you think you have been shamefully impatient about *Villette*? To-day is the first day of publication, but the gift copies were sent off yesterday, yours among the number, and I hope you have got it by this time.

If all be well I go home on Wednesday next without fail. I shall reach Keighley at 44 m. past 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and I want you to meet me there, and then we can go home together. You must be so kind, dear Nell, as to write directly and tell me whether this arrangement will suit, as I earnestly hope it will, as I should wish to write a line of notification to Martha that she may be prepared with a comfortable welcome.

My visit has on the whole passed pleasantly enough, with some sorrowful impressions. I have seen a good deal of Sir J. K. Shuttleworth, he has been very kind; so has Dr. Forbes, and indeed everybody. But I must stop. Be sure to write immediately. Give my kind love to all, and believe me, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 613

TO MARTHA BROWN

GLOUCESTER TERRACE,  
LONDON, *January 28th, 1853.*

DEAR MARTHA,—If all be well I hope to come home next Wednesday. I have asked Miss Nussey to come with me. We shall reach Haworth about half-past four o'clock in the afternoon,



and I know I can trust you to have things comfortable and in readiness. The tablecloths had better be put on the dining-room tables; you will have something prepared that will do for supper—perhaps a nice piece of cold boiled ham would be as well as anything, as it would come in for breakfast in the morning. The weather has been very changeable here, in London. I have often wondered how you and papa stood it at home; I felt the changes in some degree, but not half so much as I should have done at Haworth, and have only had one really bad day of headache and sickness since I came. I hope you and Tabby have agreed pretty well, and that you have got help in your work whenever you have wanted it. Remember me kindly to Tabby, and believe me, dear Martha, your sincere friend,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 614

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *February 11th, 1853.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—Excuse a very brief note, for I have time only to thank you for your last kind and welcome letter, and to say that in obedience to your wishes, I send you by to-day's post two reviews—the *Examiner* and the *Morning Advertiser*—which perhaps you will kindly return at your leisure. Ellen has a third, the *Literary Gazette*, which she will likewise send. The reception of the book has been favourable thus far, for which I am thankful, less, I trust, on my own account than for the sake of those few real friends who take so sincere an interest in my welfare as to be happy in my happiness. Remember me very kindly to all at Hornsea, and believe me, yours affectionately and respectfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 615

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *February 15th, 1853.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am very glad to hear that you got home all right, and that you managed to execute your commissions in Leeds so satisfactorily. You do not say whether you remembered to order the Bishop's dessert. I shall know, however, by to-morrow morning. You had a very tolerable day after all for your journey.

I got a budget of no less than seven papers yesterday and to-day. The import of all the notices is such as to make my heart swell with thankfulness to Him who takes note both of suffering and work, and motives. Papa is pleased too. As to friends in general, I believe I can love them still, without expecting them to take any large share in this sort of gratification. The longer I live the more plainly I see that gentle must be the strain on fragile human nature; it will not bear much.

Give my kind regards to your mother, sisters, and Mrs. Clapham, and believe me, yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

Papa continues to improve; he came down to breakfast this morning.

### Letter 616

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

[Undated.]

DEAR NELL,—Forgive a mere scrap of writing, I am hurried. I send your shoes by this post. Thanks for your letter, you are right to go, and to go soon. I somehow wish you to get it over; I hope you won't be *very* long away this time, whatever you eventually decide on. I am not sanguine. If your affections bind or incline you to Mr. and Mrs. Upjohn you *ought* to stay; if they do not, I know from your nature you never will be able to get on. I feel certain that for the mere prospect of 'future advantage' you could no more live with them than I could, you will see how it is. I quite anticipate difficulties, but *you will see* I wish the 'future advantage' were more defined; would it be a legacy of £40 or £50 per ann. or what? When I mentioned it to papa, he remarked that it was not *delicately* expressed. I could not but agree in this remark. He seems, however, most specially solicitous that you should try the adventure, and thinks unimportant objections ought not lightly to weigh with you.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

### Letter 617

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

[Undated.]

DEAR ELLEN,—The parcel is come, and the contents seem good and all right. I enclose 6s. 6d. in postage stamps. Mrs. Upjohn is really too trying. I do hope before this time you have

heard from her. What weather for you to travel so far! Your crotchets about papa, dear Nell, made me angry; never was fancy more groundless.

I have heard from Mrs. Gaskell, very kind, panegyric and so on. Mr. Smith tells me he has ascertained that Miss Martineau *did* write the notice in the *Daily News*.

Joe Taylor offers to give me a regular blowing up and setting-down for £5; but I tell him the *Times* will probably let me have the same gratis. I write in haste this morning. I shall be anxious to hear from you again, to know what is decided. This suspense, and this constant change of plan is very wearisome and wearing. Love to all.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 618

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*February 21st, 1853.*

DEAR NELL,—The accompanying letter was brought here by the post this morning, with the explanation that it was left last Tuesday, February 15th, at *Hainworth* Vicarage (the church between Keighley and Haworth), and that Mrs. Mayne, the clergyman's wife, kept it there till this day, for which she deserves the ducking-stool. She must have known that Miss E. Nussey was not one of her acquaintance. I do trust no serious injury will accrue from the delay.—Yours in haste,

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 619

TO GEORGE SMITH

*HAWORTH, February 26th, 1853.*

MY DEAR SIR,—At a late hour yesterday evening I had the honour of receiving, at Haworth Parsonage, a distinguished guest, none other than W. M. Thackeray, Esq. Mindful of the rites of hospitality, I hung him up in state this morning. He looks superb in his beautiful, tasteful gilded gibbet. For companion he has the Duke of Wellington (do you remember giving me that picture?), and for contrast and foil Richmond's portrait of an unworthy individual who, in such society, must be nameless.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Richmond's picture of Miss Brontë, as has been already said, is now in the National Portrait Gallery, London. The engravings of Thackeray and the Duke of Wellington are still on the walls of Mrs. Nicholls's drawing-room in Banagher, King's County, Ireland.

Thackeray looks away from the latter character with a grand scorn, edifying to witness. I wonder if the giver of these gifts will ever see them on the walls where they now hang; it pleases me to fancy that one day he may. My father stood for a quarter of an hour this morning examining the great man's picture. The conclusion of his survey was, that he thought it a puzzling head; if he had known nothing previously of the original's character, he could not have read it in his features. I wonder at this. To me the broad brow seems to express intellect. Certain lines about the nose and cheek betray the satirist and cynic; the mouth indicates a childlike simplicity—perhaps even a degree of irresoluteness, inconsistency—weakness, in short, but a weakness not unamiable. The engraving seems to me very good. A certain not quite Christian expression—‘not to put too fine a point upon it’—an expression of *spite*, most vividly marked in the original, is here softened, and perhaps a little—a very little—of the power has escaped in this ameliorating process. Did it strike you thus?

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 620

TO MRS. GASKELL

*February —, 1853.*

For my part I have thus far borne the cold weather well. I have taken long walks on the crackling snow, and felt the frosty air bracing. This winter has, for me, not been like last winter. December, January, February '51-2 passed like a long stormy night, conscious of one painful dream, all solitary grief and sickness. The corresponding months in '52-3 have gone over my head quietly and not uncheerfully. Thank God for the change and the repose! How welcome it has been He only knows! My father, too, has borne the season well; and my book and its reception thus far have pleased and cheered him.

C. BRONTË.

### Letter 621

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*March 4th, 1853.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I return Mrs. Upjohn's letter. She is really a most inconclusive person to have to do with. Have you come to



any decision yet? The Bishop<sup>1</sup> has been, and is gone. He is certainly a most charming little Bishop; the most benignant little gentleman that ever put on lawn sleeves; yet stately too, and quite competent to check encroachments. His visit passed capitally well; and at its close, as he was going away, he expressed himself thoroughly gratified with all he had seen. The Inspector also has been in the course of the past week; so that I have had a somewhat busy time of it. If you could have been at Haworth to share the pleasures of the company, without having been inconvenienced by the little bustle of the preparation, I should have been *very* glad. But the house was a good deal put out of its way, as you may suppose; all passed, however, orderly, quietly, and well. Martha waited very nicely, and I had a person to help her in the kitchen. Papa kept up, too, fully as well as I expected, though I doubt whether he could have borne another day of it. My penalty came on in a strong headache and bilious attack as soon as the Bishop was fairly gone: how thankful I was that it had politely waited his departure! I continue mighty stupid to-day: of course, it is the reaction consequent on several days of extra exertion and excitement. It is very well to talk of receiving a Bishop without trouble, but you *must* prepare for him. We had the parsons to supper as well as to tea. Mr. Nicholls demeaned himself not quite pleasantly. I thought he made no effort to struggle with his dejection, but gave way to it in a manner to draw notice; the Bishop was obviously puzzled by it. Mr. Nicholls also showed temper once or twice in speaking to papa. Martha was beginning to tell me of certain 'flaysome' looks also, but I desired not to hear of them. The fact is, I shall be most thankful when he is well away; I pity him, but I don't like that dark gloom of his. He dogged me up the lane after the evening service in no pleasant manner, he stopped also in the passage after the Bishop and the other clergy were gone into the room, and it was because I drew away and went upstairs that he gave that look which filled Martha's soul with horror. She, it seems, meantime, was making it her business to watch him from the kitchen door. If Mr. Nicholls be a good man at bottom, it is a sad thing that nature has not given him the faculty to put goodness into a more attractive form. Into the bargain of all the rest he

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Longley. Charles Thomas Longley (1794-1868) became the first Bishop of Ripon in 1836, Bishop of Durham in 1856, Archbishop of York in 1860, and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1862.

managed to get up a most pertinacious and needless dispute with the Inspector, in listening to which all my old unfavourable impressions revived so strongly, I fear my countenance could not but show them.

Dear Nell, I consider that on the whole it is a mercy you have been at home and not at Norfolk during the late cold weather. Love to all at Brookroyd.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 622

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March 10th*, '53.

DEAR ELLEN,—I only got the *Guardian* newspaper yesterday morning and have not yet seen either the *Critic* or *Sharpe's Mag.* The *Guardian* does not wound me much, I see the motive, which indeed there is no attempt to disguise, still I think it a choice little morsel for foes (Mr. Grant was the first person to bring the news of the review to papa), and a still choicer for 'friends' who, bless them! while they would not perhaps positively do one an injury, still take a dear delight in dashing with bitterness the too sweet cup of success. Is Sharpe's small article like a bit of sugar-candy too, Ellen? or has it the proper wholesome wormwood flavour?

Of course I guess it will be like the *Guardian*. It matters precious little. My dear 'friends' will weary of waiting for the *Times*. 'O Sisera! why tarry the wheels of thy chariot so long!'

How is your sister Ann? In a note I had from Miss Wooler lately, she mentions that Mrs. Clapham had lately been ill, confined to her bed. As your last makes no special mention of her illness, I trust she is now better. I hope Mercy is also convalescent and that your mother is pretty well. Give my love to them all.

Mrs. Upjohn is really a strange person, but I begin to think that when you actually go to Gorleston, you will find her better than expectation, she cannot be much worse.—I am, dear Ellen. yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 623

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *April 6th*, 1853.

DEAR ELLEN,—I return Mrs. Upjohn's letter. She has indeed acted very strangely, but it is evident to me that there is some-

thing very wrong either in herself, her husband, or her domestic arrangements, or (what is perhaps most probable) in all three, and it may be that on the whole, provoking as this conclusion appears, it is the best for you that could well be arrived at. The grounds for expecting permanent good some time ago assumed a very unsubstantial appearance; the hope of present pleasure, I fear, would have turned out equally fallacious. Indeed I now feel little confidence in either comfort or credit ensuing from the connection in any shape.

My visit to Manchester is for the present put off by Mr. Morgan having written to say that since papa will not go to Buckingham to see him, he will come to Yorkshire to see papa; when, I don't yet know, and I trust in goodness he will not stay long, as papa really cannot bear putting out of his way. I must wait, however, till the infliction is over.

You ask about Mr. Nicholls. I hear he has got a curacy, but do not yet know where. I trust the news is true. He and papa never speak. He seems to pass a desolate life. He has allowed late circumstances so to act on him as to freeze up his manner and overcast his countenance not only to those immediately concerned but to every one. He sits drearily in his rooms. If Mr. Croxton or Mr. Grant, or any other clergyman calls to see, and as they think, to cheer him, he scarcely speaks. I find he tells them nothing, seeks no confidant, rebuffs all attempts to penetrate his mind. I own I respect him for this. He still lets Flossy go to his rooms and takes him to walk. He still goes over to see Mr. Sowden sometimes, and, poor fellow, that is all. He looks ill and miserable. I think and trust in Heaven that he will be better as soon as he gets away from Haworth. I pity him inexpressibly. We never meet nor speak, nor dare I look at him, silent pity is just all I can give him, and as he knows nothing about that, it does not comfort. He is now grown so gloomy and reserved, that nobody seems to like him, his fellow-curates shun trouble in that shape, the lower orders dislike it. Papa has a perfect antipathy to him, and he, I fear, to papa. Martha hates him. I think he might almost be *dying* and they would not speak a friendly word to or of him. How much of all this he deserves I can't tell, certainly he never was agreeable or amiable, and is less so now than ever, and alas! I do not know him well enough to be sure there is truth and true affection, or only rancour and corroding disappointment at the bottom of his chagrin. In this state of things I must be, and I

am, *entirely passive*. I may be losing the purest gem, and to me far the most precious life can give—genuine attachment—or I may be escaping the yoke of a morose temper. In this doubt conscience will not suffer me to take one step in opposition to papa's will, blended as that will is with the most bitter and unreasonable prejudices. So I just leave the matter where we must leave all important matters.

Remember me kindly to all at Brookroyd, and believe me,  
yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 624

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*Tuesday Morning.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Mrs. Upjohn really carries her protractions and vacillations a little too far, and I am truly sorry that your movements should thus inevitably be hampered by her fluctuations. It is a trial of Job to be thus moved backward and forward by this most luckless of mistresses and her tribe of reprobate servants.

Thank you for sending Amelia's notes; though I have not alluded to them lately they always amuse me. I like to read them; one gets from them a clear enough idea of her sort of life. Joe's attempts to improve his good partner's mind make me smile. I think it all right enough and doubt not they are happy in their way, only the direction he gives his efforts seems of rather problematic wisdom—Algebra and Optics! Why not rather enlarge her views by a little well-chosen general reading? However, they do right to amuse themselves in their own way.

The rather dark view you seem inclined to take of the general opinion about *Villette*, surprises me the less, dear Nell, as only the more unfavourable reviews seem to have come in your way. Some reports reach me of a different tendency: but no matter, time will show. As to the character of Lucy Snowe, my intention from the first was that she should not occupy the pedestal to which *Jane Eyre* was raised by some injudicious admirers. She is where I meant her to be, and where no charge of self-laudation can touch her.<sup>1</sup>

I cannot accept your kind invitation. I must be at home at Easter, on two or three accounts connected with sermons to be preached, parsons to be entertained, Mechanics' Institute Meetings

<sup>1</sup> This sentence Mrs. Gaskell inserts, by mistake, in a letter to Mr. W. S. Williams. It is here given in its right place.



and Tea-drinkings to be solemnised, and ere long I have promised to go and see Mrs. Gaskell, but till this wintry weather is passed I would rather eschew visiting anywhere. I trust that bad cold of yours is *quite* well, and that you will take good care of yourself in future. That night work is always perilous.—Yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 625

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

DEAR ELLEN,—I have the pleasure of forwarding you a racy review in the *Morning Herald*. When read, be so good as to send the paper to Hunsworth, whence it came.—Yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 626

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *April 13th, 1853.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—Your last kind letter ought to have been answered long since, and would have been, did I find it practicable to proportion the promptitude of the response to the value I place upon my correspondents and their communications. You will easily understand, however, that the contrary rule often holds good, and that the epistle which importunes often takes precedence of that which interests.

My publishers express entire satisfaction with the reception which has been accorded to *Villette*, and indeed the majority of the reviews has been favourable enough; you will be aware, however, that there is a minority, small in number but influential in character, which views the work with no favourable eye. Currer Bell's remarks on Romanism have drawn down on him the condign displeasure of the High Church party, which displeasure has been unequivocally expressed through their principal organs—the *Guardian*, the *English Churchman*, and the *Christian Remembrancer*. I can well understand that some of the charges launched against me by those publications will tell heavily to my prejudice in the minds of most readers—but this must be borne; and for my part, I can suffer no accusation to oppress me much which is not supported by the inward evidence of conscience and reason.

'Extremes meet,' says the proverb; in proof whereof I would mention that Miss Martineau finds with *Villette* nearly the same fault as the Puseyites. She accuses me with attacking popery 'with virulence,' of going out of my way to assault it 'passionately.' In other respects she has shown with reference to the work a spirit so strangely and unexpectedly acrimonious, that I have gathered courage to tell her that the gulf of mutual difference between her and me is so wide and deep, the bridge of union so slight and uncertain, I have come to the conclusion that frequent intercourse would be most perilous and inadvisable, and have begged to adjourn *sine die* my long projected visit to her. Of course she is now very angry, and I know her bitterness will not be short-lived—but it cannot be helped.

Two or three weeks since I received a long and kind letter from Mr. White, which I answered a short time ago. I believe Mr. White thinks me a much hotter advocate for *change* and what is called 'political progress' than I am. However, in my reply, I did not touch on these subjects. He intimated a wish to publish some of his own MSS. I fear he would hardly like the somewhat dissuasive tendency of my answer; but really, in these days of headlong competition, it is a great risk to publish. If all be well, I purpose going to Manchester next week to spend a few days with Mrs. Gaskell. Ellen's visit to Yarmouth seems for the present given up; and really, all things considered, I think the circumstance is scarcely to be regretted.

Do you not think, my dear Miss Wooler, that you could come to Haworth before you go to the coast? I am afraid that when you once get settled at the seaside your stay will not be brief. I must repeat that a visit from you would be anticipated with pleasure, not only by me, but by every inmate of Haworth Parsonage. Papa has given me a general commission to send his respects to you whenever I write—accept them, therefore, and—Believe me, yours affectionately and sincerely,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 627

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

MY DEAR SIR,—Were a review to appear, inspired with treble their animus, *pray* do not withhold it from me. I like to see the satisfactory notices—especially I like to carry them to my father

—but I *must* see such as are *unsatisfactory* and hostile; these are for my own especial edification; it is in these I best read public feeling and opinion. To shun examination into the dangerous and disagreeable seems to me cowardly. I long always to know what really *is*, and am only unnerved when kept in the dark. . . .

The note you sent this morning from Lady Harriet St. Clair<sup>1</sup> is precisely to the same purport as Miss Mulock's<sup>2</sup> request—an application for exact and authentic information respecting the fate of M. Paul Emanuel! You see how much the ladies think of this little man, whom you none of you like. I had a letter the other day announcing that a lady of some note, who had always determined that whenever she married her husband should be the counterpart of 'Mr. Knightley' in Miss Austen's *Emma*, had now changed her mind, and vowed that she would either find the duplicate of Professor Emanuel or remain for ever single! I have sent Lady Harriet an answer so worded as to leave the matter pretty much where it was. Since the little puzzle amuses the ladies, it would be a pity to spoil their sport by giving them the key.

## Letter 628

TO MRS. GASKELL, MANCHESTER

HAWORTH, *April 14th*, 1853.

MY DEAR MRS. GASKELL,—Would it suit you if I were to come next Thursday, the 21st?

If that day tallies with your convenience, and if my father continues as well as he is now, I know of no engagement on my part which need compel me longer to defer the pleasure of seeing you.

I should arrive by the train which reaches Manchester at 7 o'clock P.M. That, I think, would be about your tea-time, and, of course, I should dine before leaving home. I always like evening for an arrival; it seems more cosy and pleasant than coming in about the busy middle of the day. I think if I stay

<sup>1</sup> Lady Harriet Elizabeth, daughter of the third Earl of Rosslyn, and sister of the poet. She married Count Münster, German Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, and died in 1867.

<sup>2</sup> Dinah Maria Mulock, Mrs. Craik (1826-1887), author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*.

a week that will be a very long visit ; it will give you time to get well tired of me.

Remember me very kindly to Mr. Gaskell and Marianne. As to Mesdames Flossy and Julia, those venerable ladies are requested beforehand to make due allowance for the awe with which they will be sure to impress a diffident admirer. I am sorry I shall not see Meta.—Believe me my dear Mrs. Gaskell, yours affectionately and sincerely

C. BRONTË.



## CHAPTER XXXI

## FRIENDSHIP WITH MRS. GASKELL

THE friendship of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë was destined to be brief, but it seems to have been of the most genuine character. Never, anywhere, do we find a single jarring note. Mrs. Gaskell gave a whole-hearted admiration to the novels of her friend, and Miss Brontë keenly enjoyed *Mary Barton*, *Cranford*, and *Ruth*, the three important books by Mrs. Gaskell that were written before Charlotte Brontë's death. Mrs. Gaskell has of late obtained a far greater reputation in literature than could have been anticipated by her contemporaries,<sup>1</sup> and it is pleasant to be able to bind together the two names in this correspondence. The house at Plymouth Grove, in a suburb of Manchester, stands to-day very much as it did when Miss Brontë visited it, and indeed is still occupied by two daughters of Mrs. Gaskell, whose devotion to their mother's memory is very beautiful.

## Letter 629

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *April 18th*, '53.

DEAR ELLEN,—It seems they are in great trouble again at Hunsworth; I have had two or three notes from Amelia giving sad accounts of little Tim. Do you know anything certain on the subject? Amelia's communications as usual seem a good deal

<sup>1</sup> One complete edition of her *Works*, edited by Dr. A. W. Ward, was issued in 1906 by Smith, Elder & Co.; and another, published by Henry Frowde in the 'World's Classics,' is in progress.

coloured by alarm, natural enough no doubt under the circumstances, but still involving inconsistencies of statement which leave one somewhat in the dark. Symptoms seem attributed to the poor child which would indicate scarlet fever, brain fever, and croup all in one. The parents watch all night, the doctor stays till 12 o'clock. Still I hope Tim will get through it.

You seem quite gay at Brookroyd. I hope you continue well and hearty through all your visiting, and indeed, I think the variety quite advisable, provided you keep duly on your guard against the night-air.

If all be well, I think of going to Manchester about the close of this week. I only intend staying a few days, but I can say nothing about coming back by way of Brookroyd. Do not expect me; I would rather see you at Haworth by-and-by.

Two or three weeks since Miss Martineau wrote to ask why she did not hear from me, and to press me to go to Ambleside. Explanations ensued, the notes on each side were quite civil, but having deliberately formed my resolution on substantial grounds, I adhered to it. I have declined being her visitor, and bid her good-bye. Of course some bitterness remains in her heart. It is best so, however; the antagonism of our natures and principles was too serious a thing to be trifled with.

I have no news for you: things at Haworth are as they were. Remember me kindly to all at Brookroyd, and believe me, yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

Mr. M. did *not* come; and if he had, the subject you mention would not have been touched on. Papa alludes to it to nobody; he calls it '*degrading*' and would not have it hinted at or known. This circumstance serves as a tolerably pointed illustration of his painful way of viewing the matter.

Mrs. Gaskell's address is Plymouth Grove, Manchester.

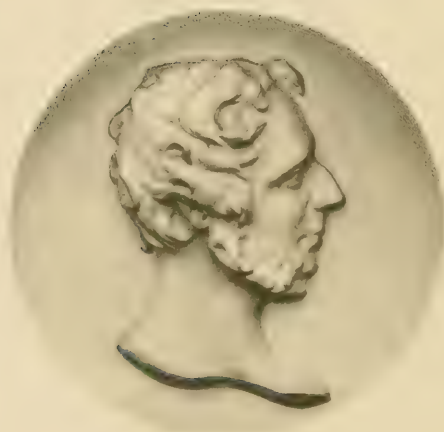
## Letter 630

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

PLYMOUTH GROVE,  
MANCHESTER, *April 23rd*, 1853.

DEAR ELLEN,—I came here yesterday, and found your letter. There is something in its tone which makes me apprehend that you are rather low spirited, so that I shall manage to do as you





*The Rev. Patrick Brontë*  
*from a daguerreotype*

*Patrick Branwell Brontë*  
*from a medallion by Leyland*

*Emory Walker Ph. Sc.*



wish and return by Birstall. I expect to leave here next Thursday, and return home on Saturday, but I will write again, D.V., before Thursday.

I only scratch this hasty line now to give you an idea of my movements. With kind regards to all at Brookroyd, and best birthday wishes to yourself, I am, dear Ellen, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Mrs. Gaskell thus records her impression of this visit :—

She came, at the close of April, to visit us in Manchester. We had a friend, a young lady, staying with us. Miss Brontë had expected to find us alone; and although our friend was gentle and sensible after Miss Brontë's own heart, yet her presence was enough to create a nervous tremor. I was aware that both of our guests were unusually silent; and I saw a little shiver run from time to time over Miss Brontë's frame. I could account for the modest reserve of the young lady; and the next day Miss Brontë told me how the unexpected sight of a strange face had affected her.

Mrs.  
Gaskell's  
Narrative.

It was now two or three years since I had witnessed a similar effect produced on her, in anticipation of a quiet evening at Fox How; and since then she had seen many and various people in London: but the physical sensations produced by shyness were still the same; and on the following day she laboured under severe headache. I had several opportunities of perceiving how this nervousness was ingrained in her constitution, and how acutely she suffered in striving to overcome it. One evening we had, among other guests, two sisters who sang Scottish ballads exquisitely. Miss Brontë had been sitting quiet and constrained till they began 'The Bonnie House of Airlie,' but the effect of that and 'Carlisle Yetts,' which followed, was as irresistible as the playing of the Piper of Hamelin. The beautiful clear light came into her eyes; her lips quivered with emotion; she forgot herself, rose, and crossed the room to the piano, where she asked eagerly for song after song. The sisters begged her to come and see them the next morning, when they would sing as long as ever she liked; and she promised gladly and thankfully. But on reaching the house her courage failed. We walked some time up and down the street; she upbraiding herself all the while for folly, and trying to dwell on the sweet echoes in her memory rather than on the thought of a third sister who would have to be faced if we

went in. But it was of no use ; and dreading lest this struggle with herself might bring on one of her trying headaches, I entered at last and made the best apology I could for her non-appearance. Much of this nervous dread of encountering strangers I ascribed to the idea of her personal ugliness, which had been strongly impressed upon her imagination early in life, and which she exaggerated to herself in a remarkable manner. 'I notice,' said she, 'that after a stranger has once looked at my face he is careful not to let his eyes wander to that part of the room again!' A more untrue idea never entered into any one's head. Two gentlemen who saw her during this visit, without knowing at the time who she was, were singularly attracted by her appearance ; and this feeling of attraction towards a pleasant countenance, sweet voice, and gentle timid manners was so strong in one as to conquer a dislike he had previously entertained to her works.

There was another circumstance that came to my knowledge at this period which told secrets about the finely strung frame. One night I was on the point of relating some dismal ghost story, just before bedtime. She shrank from hearing it, and confessed that she was superstitious, and prone at all times to the involuntary recurrence of any thoughts of ominous gloom which might have been suggested to her. She said that on first coming to us she had found a letter on her dressing-table from a friend in Yorkshire, containing a story which had impressed her vividly ever since—that it mingled with her dreams at night and made her sleep restless and unrefreshing.

One day we asked two gentlemen to meet her at dinner, expecting that she and they would have a mutual pleasure in making each other's acquaintance. To our disappointment she drew back with timid reserve from all their advances, replying to their questions and remarks in the briefest manner possible, till at last they gave up their efforts to draw her into conversation in despair, and talked to each other and my husband on subjects of recent local interest. Among these Thackeray's Lectures (which had lately been delivered in Manchester) were spoken of, and that on Fielding especially dwelt upon. One gentleman objected to it strongly as calculated to do moral harm, and regretted that a man having so great an influence over the tone of thought of the day as Thackeray should not more carefully weigh his words. The other took the opposite view. He said that Thackeray described men from the inside, as it were ; through his strong power of

dramatic sympathy he identified himself with certain characters, felt their temptations, entered into their pleasures, etc. This roused Miss Brontë, who threw herself warmly into the discussion; the ice of her reserve was broken, and from that time she showed her interest in all that was said, and contributed her share to any conversation that was going on in the course of the evening.<sup>1</sup>

## Letter 631

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 26th, 1853.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I hope to reach Birstall on Thursday at 5 o'clock, if all be well, and stay till Saturday or Monday, as we shall decide when we meet. I have had a very pleasant visit here, but we can chat about it anon. I have only just time to pen this notification. Kind regards.—I am, yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 632

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 16th, 1853.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Habituated by this time to Mrs. Upjohn's fluctuations, I received the news of this fresh put off without the slightest sentiment of wonder. Indeed, I keep all my powers of surprise for the intelligence that you are safely arrived at Gorleston, and still more for the desired but very moderately expected tidings that you are happy there.

The east winds about which you inquire have spared me wonderfully till to-day, when I feel somewhat sick physically, and not very blithe mentally. I am not sure that the east winds are entirely to blame for this ailment. Yesterday was a strange sort of a day at church. It seems as if I were to be punished for my doubts about the nature and truth of poor Mr. Nicholls's regard. Having ventured on Whit-Sunday to stop to the sacrament, I got a lesson not to be repeated. He struggled, faltered, then lost command over himself, stood before my eyes and in the sight of all the communicants, white, shaking, voiceless. Papa was not there, thank God! Joseph Redman spoke some words to him. He made a great effort, but could only with difficulty whisper and

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Haworth edition, pp. 607-9.

falter through the service. I suppose he thought this would be the last time ; he goes either this week or the next. I heard the women sobbing round, and I could not quite check my own tears. What had happened was reported to papa either by Joseph Redman or John Brown ; it excited only anger, and such expressions as 'unmanly driveller.' Compassion or relenting is no more to be looked for than sap from firewood.

I never saw a battle more sternly fought with the feelings than Mr. Nicholls fights with his, and when he yields momentarily, you are almost sickened by the sense of the strain upon him. However he is to go, and I cannot speak to him or look at him or comfort him a whit, and I must submit. Providence is over all, that is the only consolation.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

### Letter 633

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *May 19th*, 1853.

DEAR ELLEN,—It is almost a relief to hear that you only think of staying at Yarmouth a month, though of course one must not be selfish in wishing you to come home soon, and you will be guided in your final decision by the state of things as you find it at Mrs. Upjohn's. There cannot, I think, be any disappointment in the business. I really do hope causes may be discovered of agreeable surprise. At any rate for a month you surely may be made comfortable, unless the house be really haunted, as Mr. Clapham supposed.

You do not mention how you got on on Whit-Tuesday. Tell me when you write again.

I cannot help feeling a certain satisfaction in finding that the people here are getting up a subscription to offer a testimonial of respect to Mr. Nicholls on his leaving the place.<sup>1</sup> Many are expressing both their commiseration and esteem for him. The Churchwardens recently put the question to him plainly. Why was he going? Was it Mr. Brontë's fault or his own? 'His own,' he answered. Did he blame Mr. Brontë? 'No! he did not: if

<sup>1</sup> It took the form of a gold watch, which Mr. Nicholls showed me with natural pride, forty years later, while walking over his farm at Banagher. The following inscription was engraved upon it :—'Presented to the Rev. A. B. Nicholls, B.A., by the teachers, scholars, and congregation of St. Michael's, Haworth, Yorkshire, May 25, 1853.'



anybody was wrong it was himself.' Was he willing to go? 'No! it gave him great pain.' Yet he is not always right. I must be just. He shows a curious mixture of honour and obstinacy; feeling and sullenness. Papa addressed him at the school tea-drinking, with *constrained* civility, but still with *civility*. He did not reply civilly; he cut short further words. This sort of treatment offered in public is what papa never will forget or forgive it inspires him with a silent bitterness not to be expressed. I am afraid both are unchristian in their mutual feelings. Nor do I know which of them is least accessible to reason or least likely to forgive. It is a dismal state of things.

The weather is fine now, dear Nell. We will take these sunny days as a good omen for your visit to Yarmouth. With kind regards to all at Brookroyd, and best wishes to yourself.—I am,  
yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

If you have time before you go, I wish you would get me 1 lb. of plain biscuits like those you had at Brookroyd, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of invalid biscuits, and send them per rail. I can pay for them in postage stamps. They are things I cannot get here, nor good, at Keighley.

## Letter 634

TO MRS. GASKELL

HAWORTH, May —, 1853.

The Lectures arrived safely; I have read them through twice. They must be studied to be appreciated. I thought well of them when I heard them delivered, but now I see their real power, and it is great. The lecture on Swift was new to me; I thought it almost matchless. Not that by any means I always agree with Mr. Thackeray's opinions, but his force, his penetration, his pithy simplicity, his eloquence—his manly, sonorous eloquence—command entire admiration. . . . Against his errors I protest, were it treason to do so. I was present at the Fielding lecture: the hour spent in listening to it was a painful hour. That Thackeray was wrong in his way of treating Fielding's character and vices my conscience told me. After reading that lecture I trebly felt that he was wrong—dangerously wrong. Had Thackeray owned a son, grown or growing up, and a son brilliant but reckless—would he have spoken in that light way of courses

that lead to disgrace and the grave? He speaks of it all as if he theorised; as if he had never been called on, in the course of his life, to witness the actual consequences of such failings; as if he had never stood by and seen the issue, the final result of it all. I believe, if only once the prospect of a promising life blasted at the outset by wild ways had passed close under his eyes, he never *could* have spoken with such levity of what led to its piteous destruction. Had I a brother yet living, I should tremble to let him read Thackeray's lecture on Fielding. I should hide it away from him. If, in spite of precaution, it should fall into his hands, I should earnestly pray him not to be misled by the voice of the charmer, let him charm never so wisely. Not that for a moment I would have had Thackeray to *abuse* Fielding, or even pharisaically to condemn his life; but I do most deeply grieve that it never entered into his heart sadly and nearly to feel the peril of such a career, that he might have dedicated some of his great strength to a potent warning against its adoption by any young man. I believe temptation often assails the finest manly natures, as the pecking sparrow or destructive wasp attacks the sweetest and mellowest fruit, eschewing what is sour and crude. The true lover of his race ought to devote his vigour to guard and protect; he should sweep away every lure with a kind of rage at its treachery. You will think this far too serious, I dare say; but the subject is serious, and one cannot help feeling upon it earnestly.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 635

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *May 27th*, 1853

DEAR ELLEN,—I was right glad to get your letter this morning and to find that you really were safely arrived at last. How strange it seems though that there should have been a sort of miscalculation up to the very last! I am afraid you would feel a little damped on your arrival to find Mrs. Upjohn from home. However, I *do* think it is well you are gone, the experiment was worth trying, and according to present appearances really promises very fairly. If tempers, etc., are only right, there seem to be many other appliances and means for enjoyment. I do not much like to hear of that supposed affection of the brain. If there be any thing wrong there, it is to be feared that with time it will rather

increase than diminish ; however let us hope for the best. I trust Mr. Upjohn may prove a pleasant, well-informed companion.

The biscuits came all right, but I believe you have sent about twice the quantity I ordered. You *must* tell me how much they cost, dear Nell, or I shall never be able to ask you to render me a similar service again.

I send by this post the *Examiner* and French paper. I suppose I had better suppress the *Leader* while you are at Gorleston. I don't think it would suit Mr. Upjohn.

You will want to know about the leave-taking ; the whole matter is but a painful subject, but I must treat it briefly. The testimonial was presented in a public meeting. Mr. T. and Mr. Grant were there. Papa was not very well and I advised him to stay away, which he did. As to the last Sunday, it was a cruel struggle. Mr. Nicholls ought not to have had to take any duty.

He left Haworth this morning at 6 o'clock. Yesterday evening he called to render into papa's hands the deeds of the National School, and to say good-bye. They were busy cleaning, washing the paint, etc., in the dining-room, so he did not find me there. I would not go into the parlour to speak to him in papa's presence. He went out thinking he was not to see me, and indeed, till the very last moment, I thought it best not. But perceiving that he stayed long before going out at the gate, and remembering his long grief, I took courage and went out trembling and miserable. I found him leaning against the garden door in a paroxysm of anguish, sobbing as women never sob. Of course I went straight to him. Very few words were interchanged, those few barely articulate. Several things I should have liked to ask him were swept entirely from my memory. Poor fellow ! But he wanted such hope and such encouragement as I could not give him. Still I trust he must know now that I am not cruelly blind and indifferent to his constancy and grief. For a few weeks he goes to the South of England, afterwards he takes a curacy somewhere in Yorkshire, but I don't know where.

Papa has been far from strong lately. I dare not mention Mr. Nicholls's name to him. He speaks of him quietly and without opprobrium to others, but to me he is implacable on the matter. However, he is gone—gone—and there's an end of it. I see no chance of hearing a word about him in future, unless some stray shred of intelligence comes through Mr. Sowden or some other second-hand source. In all this it is not I who am to be pitied at

all, and of course nobody pities me. They all think, in Haworth, that I have disdainfully refused him, etc. If pity would do Mr. Nicholls any good, he ought to have and I believe has it. They may abuse me if they will; whether they do or not I can't tell.

Write soon and say how your prospects proceed. I trust they will daily brighten.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 636

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

HAWORTH, *May 28th*, 1853.

MY DEAR SIR,—The box of books arrived safely yesterday evening, and I feel especially obliged for the selection, as it includes several that will be acceptable and interesting to my father.

I despatch to-day a box of return books. Among them will be found two or three of those just sent, being such as I had read before—*i.e.* Moore's *Life and Correspondence*, 1st and 2nd vols.; Lamartine's *Restoration of the Monarchy*, etc. I have thought of you more than once during the late bright weather, knowing how genial you find warmth and sunshine. I trust it has brought this season its usual cheering and beneficial effect. Remember me kindly to Mrs. Williams and her daughters, and—Believe me, yours sincerely, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 637

TO MRS. GASKELL

HAWORTH, *June 1st*, 1853.

DEAR MRS. GASKELL,—June is come, and now I want to know if you can come on Thursday, the 9th inst.

Ever since I was at Manchester I have been anticipating your visit. Not that I attempt to justify myself in asking you; the place has no attractions, as I told you, here in this house. Papa too takes great interest in the matter. I only pray that the weather may be fine, and that a cold, by which I am now stupefied, may be gone before the 9th, so that I may have no let and hindrance in taking you on to the moors—the sole, but, with one who loves nature as you do, not despicable, resource.

When you take leave of the domestic circle and turn your back



on Plymouth Grove to come to Haworth, you must do it in the spirit which might sustain you in case you were setting out on a brief trip to the backwoods of America. Leaving behind your husband, children, and civilisation, you must come out to barbarism, loneliness, and liberty. The change will perhaps do good, if not too prolonged. . . . Please, when you write, to mention by what train you will come, and at what hour you will arrive at Keighley; for I must take measures to have a conveyance waiting for you at the station; otherwise, as there is no cab-stand, you might be inconvenienced and hindered.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 638

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*June 6th, '53.*

DEAR ELLEN,—At present, I will comment on nothing you have told me. I am so unlucky as to have got a very bad influenza cold, and to-day I am so miserably sick, I cannot bear out of bed. Write to me again when you get to your Brother's.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

Mrs. Gaskell has written to say she will come on Thursday and stay till Monday. Unless I alter very much and very rapidly, I shall be constrained to send her back word not to come.

## Letter 639

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*June 13th, 1853.*

DEAR ELLEN,—You must still excuse a few scant lines. I have been suffering most severely for ten days with continued pain in the head, on the nerves it is said to be; blistering at last seems to have done it some good, but I am yet weak and bewildered. Of course I could not receive Mrs. Gaskell; it was a great disappointment. I now long to be better, to get her visit over if possible, and then to ask you; but I must wait awhile yet. Papa has not been well either, but I hope he is better now. You have had a hard time of it and some rough experience. Good-bye for the present. I wish much to talk with you about these strange, unhappy people at G——.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 640

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*June 16th, '53.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am better now. As usual the reduction of strength was rapid, and the convalescence equally so. The very dreadful pain in my head is almost gone, and so is the influenza. Papa too is better, but I was frightened about him, not that he has in the least lost appetite, or thought himself ill, but the eyes, etc., betrayed those symptoms that fill me with alarm.

I have written to Mrs. Gaskell to ask her for next week; when I get her answer I will tell you what is its purport, and your coming can be arranged accordingly.

I am glad, dear Nell, you are having a little enjoyment. Stay at Oundle, if you can, till you hear from me again. You had better come direct here if we can arrange it; we shall see.—Yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 641

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*June 20th, '53.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I have been very much vexed to find that Martha forgot to post my letter of Saturday till too late, consequently as we have no post on Sunday it will not reach you till to-day at the earliest. I now write a line to tell you to be sure and arrange your departure from Oundle according to your own convenience. My health has nothing to do with the question, as I am now about in my usual condition, only thin, as I always am after illness. Be sure, however, to let me know the time of your arrival that I may arrange to send for you.

I do trust it may be fine healthy weather while you are here. The enclosed is from Amelia to you. I have not read it, though it was sent to me open. It takes two posts from O. to Haworth.

I shall expect you by next Thursday.—Yours faithfully,

C. BRONTË.

I trust you will get through your journey all right.

## Letter 642

TO MRS. GASKELL

July 9th, 1853.

Thank you for your letter ; it was as pleasant as a quiet chat, as welcome as spring showers, as reviving as a friend's visit ; in short, it was very like a page of *Cranford*. . . . A thought strikes me. Do you, who have so many friends—so large a circle of acquaintance—find it easy, when you sit down to write, to isolate yourself from all those ties, and their sweet associations, so as to be your *own woman*, uninfluenced or swayed by the consciousness of how your work may affect other minds ; what blame or what sympathy it may call forth ? Does no luminous cloud ever come between you and the severe Truth, as you know it in your own secret and clear-seeing soul ? In a word, are you never tempted to make your characters more amiable than the Life, by the inclination to assimilate your thoughts to the thoughts of those who always *feel* kindly, but sometimes fail to *see* justly ? Don't answer the question ; it is not intended to be answered. . . . Your account of Mrs. Stowe was stimulatingly interesting. I long to see you, to get you to say it, and many other things, all over again. My father continues better. I am better too ; but to-day I have a headache again, which will hardly let me write coherently. Give my dear love to Meta and Marianne, dear happy girls as they are. You cannot now transmit my message to Flossy and Julia. I prized the little wild-flower—not that I think the sender cares for me ; she *does* not, and *cannot*, for she does not know me ; but no matter. In my reminiscences she is a person of a certain distinction. I think hers a fine little nature, frank and of genuine promise. I often see her, as she appeared, stepping supreme from the portico towards the carriage, that evening we went to see *Twelfth Night*. I believe in Julia's future ; I like what speaks in her movements, and what is written upon her face.—Yours very gratefully, C. BRONTË.

The review which seemed to affect Miss Brontë most of all was one in *The Christian Remembrancer* of April 1853, in which the author of *Villette* was described as 'having gained both in amiability and propriety since she first presented herself to the world—soured, coarse, and

grumbling; an alien, it might seem, from society, and amenable to none of its laws.' Dr. Robertson Nicoll has unearthed a protest from Charlotte Brontë to the editor of *The Christian Remembrancer*, in which the author of *Villette* resents the suggestion of her critic that she is an alien from society.<sup>1</sup>

## Letter 643

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER'

HAWORTH, *July 10th*, 1853.

SIR,—To him I would say that no cause of seclusion such as he would imply has ever come near my thoughts, deeds, or life. It has not entered my experience. It has not crossed my observation.

Providence so regulated my destiny that I was born and have been reared in the seclusion of a country parsonage. I have never been rich enough to go out into the world as a participator in its gaieties, though it early became my duty to leave home, in order partly to diminish the many calls on a limited income. That income is lightened of claims in another sense now, for of a family of six I am the only survivor.

My father is now in his seventy-seventh year; his mind is clear as it ever was, and he is not infirm, but he suffers from partial privation and threatened loss of sight; and his general health is also delicate—he cannot be left often or long: my place consequently is at home. These are reasons which make retirement a plain duty; but were no such reasons in existence, were I bound by no such ties, it is very possible that seclusion might still appear to me, on the whole, more congenial than publicity; the brief and rare glimpses I have had of the world do not incline me to think I should seek its circles with very keen zest—nor can I consider such disinclination a just subject for reproach.

This is the truth. The careless, rather than malevolent insinuations of reviewers have, it seems, widely spread another impression. It would be weak to complain, but I feel that it is only right to place the real in opposition to the unreal.

Will you kindly show this note to my reviewer? Perhaps he

<sup>1</sup> *The Bookman*, November 1899.



cannot now find an antidote for the poison into which he dipped that shaft he shot at 'Currer Bell,' but when again tempted to take aim at other prey, let him refrain his hand a moment till he has considered consequences to the wounded, and recalled the 'golden rule.'

CURRER BELL.

It was fated that the two reviews of her work which most offended Miss Brontë should have been written by women—the *Quarterly Review* article by Miss Rigby, and, as I also learn from Dr. Nicoll, *The Christian Remembrancer* article by Miss Anne Mozley.

## Letter 644

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *August 30th, 1853.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I was from home when your kind letter came, and as it was not forwarded, I did not get it till my return. All the summer I have felt the wish and cherished the intention to join you for a brief period at the seaside; nor do I yet entirely relinquish the purpose, though its fulfilment must depend on my father's health. At present he complains so much of weakness and depressed spirits, no thoughts of leaving him can be entertained. Should he improve, however, I would fain come to you before autumn is quite gone.

My late absence was but for a week, when I accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Taylor on a trip to Scotland. They went with the intention of taking up their quarters at Kirkcudbright, or some watering-place on the Solway Frith. We barely reached that locality, and stayed but one night, when the baby (that rather despotic member of modern households) exhibited some symptoms of indisposition. To my unskilled perception its ailments appeared very slight, nowise interfering with its appetite or spirits, but parental eyes saw the matter in a different light; the air of Scotland was pronounced unpropitious to the child, and consequently we had to retrace our steps. I own to have felt some little reluctance to leave 'bonnie Scotland' so soon and so abruptly, but of course I could not say a word, since, however strong on my own mind the impression that the ailment in question was very trivial and temporary (an impression confirmed by

the issue), I could not be absolutely certain that such was the case, and had any evil consequences followed a prolonged stay, I should never have forgiven myself.

Ilkley was the next place thought of. We went there, but I only remained three days, for in the hurry of changing trains at one of the stations, my box was lost, and without clothes I could not stay. I have heard of it since, but I have not yet regained it. In all probability it is now lying at Kirkcudbright, where it was directed.

Notwithstanding some minor trials, I greatly enjoyed this little excursion; the scenery through which we travelled from Dumfries to Kirkcudbright (a distance of thirty miles performed outside a stage-coach), was beautiful, though not all of a peculiarly Scottish character, being richly cultivated, and well wooded. I liked Ilkley too, exceedingly, and shall long to revisit the place. On the whole, I thought it for the best that circumstances obliged me to return home so soon, for I found papa far from well; he is something better now, yet I shall not feel it right to leave him again till I see a more thorough re-establishment of health and strength.

With some things to regret and smile at, I saw many things to admire in the small family party with which I travelled. Mr. Taylor makes a most devoted father and husband. I admired his great kindness to his wife. But I rather groaned (inwardly) over the unbounded indulgence of both parents towards their only child. The world revolves round the sun; certain babies, I plainly perceive, are the more important centre of all things. The papa and mamma could only take their meals, rest and exercise at such times and in such measure as the despotic infant permitted. While Mrs. Taylor ate her dinner, Mr. Taylor relieved guard as nurse. A nominal nurse indeed accompanied the party, but her place was a sort of anxious waiting sinecure, as the child did not fancy her attendance. Tenderness to offspring is a virtue, yet I think I have seen mothers—the late Mrs. Atkinson for instance—who were most tender and thoughtful, yet, in very love for their children, would not permit them to become tyrants either over themselves or others.

I shall be glad and grateful, my dear Miss Wooler, to hear from you again whenever you have time or inclination to write, though, as I told you before, there is no fear of my misunderstanding silence.

Should you leave Hornsea before winter sets in, I trust you will just come straight to Haworth, and pay your long-anticipated visit there before you go elsewhere.

Papa and the servants send their respects. I always duly deliver your kind messages of remembrance because they give pleasure.—Believe me always, yours affectionately and respectfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 645

TO MRS. GASKELL

*September —, 1853.*

DEAR MRS. GASKELL,—I was glad to get your little note, glad to hear you were at home again. Not that, practically, it makes much difference to me whether you are in Normandy or Manchester: the shorter distance separates perhaps as effectually as the longer, yet there is a mental comfort in thinking that but thirty miles intervene.

Come to Haworth as soon as you can; the heath is in bloom now; I have waited and watched for its purple signal as the fore-runner of your coming. It will not be quite faded before the 16th, but after that it will soon grow sere. Be sure to mention the day and hour of your arrival at Keighley.

My father has passed the summer, not well, yet better than I expected. His chief complaint is of weakness and depressed spirits; the prospect of your visit still affords him pleasure. I am surprised to see how he looks forward to it. My own health has been much better lately.

I suppose that Meta is ere this returned to school again. This summer's tour will no doubt furnish a lifelong remembrance of pleasure to her and Marianne. Great would be the joy of the little ones at seeing you all home again.

I saw in the papers the death of Mr. S., of scarlet fever, at his residence in Wales. Was it not there you left Flossy and Julia? This thought recurred to me, with some chilling fears of what might happen; but I trust that all is safe now. How is poor Mrs. S.?

Remember me very, very kindly to Mr. Gaskell and the whole circle. Write when you have time; come at the earliest day, and believe me yours very truthfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 646

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *September 8th.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—Your letter was truly kind and made me warmly wish to join you. My prospects, however, of being able to leave home continue very unsettled. I am expecting Mrs. Gaskell next week or the week after, the day being yet undetermined. She was to have come in June, but then my severe attack of influenza rendered it impossible that I should receive or entertain her; since that time she has been absent on the Continent with her husband and two eldest girls, and just before I received yours I had a letter from her volunteering a visit at a vague date, which I requested her to fix as soon as possible. My father has been much better during the last three or four days.

When I know anything certain I will write to you again. Believe me, my dear Miss Wooler, yours respectfully and affectionately,  
C. BRONTË.

Mrs. Gaskell thus describes her visit in a letter written from Haworth at the time and afterwards published in her biography of Charlotte Brontë:—

## Letter 647

MRS. GASKELL TO A FRIEND

It was a dull, drizzly, Indian-inky day all the way on the railroad to Keighley, which is a rising wool-manufacturing town, lying in a hollow between hills—not a pretty hollow, but more what the Yorkshire people call a ‘bottom,’ or ‘botham.’ I left Keighley in a car for Haworth, four miles off—four tough, steep, scrambling miles, the road winding between the wavelike hills that rose and fell on every side of the horizon, with a long, illimitable, sinuous look, as if they were a part of the line of the Great Serpent which the Norse legend says girdles the world. The day was lead-coloured; the road had stone factories alongside of it; grey, dull-coloured rows of stone cottages belonging to these factories;



and then we came to poor, hungry-looking fields—stone fences everywhere, and trees nowhere. Haworth is a long, straggling village: one steep narrow street—so steep that the flagstones with which it is paved are placed endways, that the horses' feet may have something to cling to, and not slip down backwards, which if they did they would soon reach Keighley. But if the horses had cats' feet and claws they would do all the better. Well, we (the man, horse, car, and I) clambered up this street, and reached the church dedicated to St. Austest (who was he?); then we turned off into a lane on the left, past the curate's lodging at the sexton's, past the schoolhouse, up to the Parsonage yard-door. I went round the house to the front door, looking to the church;—moors everywhere beyond and above. The crowded graveyard surrounds the house and small grass enclosure for drying clothes.

I don't know that I ever saw a spot more exquisitely clean; the most dainty place for that I ever saw. To be sure the life is like clockwork. No one comes to the house; nothing disturbs the deep repose; hardly a voice is heard; you catch the ticking of the clock in the kitchen, or the buzzing of a fly in the parlour, all over the house. Miss Brontë sits alone in her parlour, breakfasting with her father in his study at nine o'clock. She helps in the housework; for one of their servants (Tabby) is nearly ninety, and the other only a girl. Then I accompanied her in her walks on the sweeping moors; the heather bloom had been blighted by a thunderstorm a day or two before, and was all of a livid brown colour, instead of the blaze of purple glory it ought to have been. Oh! those high, wild, desolate moors, up above the whole world, and the very realms of silence! Home to dinner at two. Mr Brontë has his dinner sent in to him. All the small table arrangements had the same dainty simplicity about them. Then we rested, and talked over the clear bright fire; it is a cold country, and the fires gave a pretty warm dancing light all over the house. The parlour has been evidently refurnished within the last few years, since Miss Brontë's success has enabled her to have a little more money to spend. Everything fits into, and is in harmony with, the idea of a country parsonage, possessed by people of very moderate means. The prevailing colour of the room is crimson, to make a warm setting for the cold grey landscape without. There is her likeness by Richmond, and an engraving from Lawrence's picture of Thackeray; and two recesses, on each side of the high, narrow, old-fashioned mantelpiece, filled with books—

books given to her, books she has bought, and which tell of her individual pursuits and tastes; *not* standard books.

She cannot see well, and does little beside knitting. The way she weakened her eyesight was this: When she was sixteen or seventeen, she wanted much to draw; and she copied nimini-pimini copper-plate engravings out of annuals ('stippling' don't the artists call it?), every little point put in, till at the end of six months she had produced an exquisitely faithful copy of the engraving. She wanted to learn to express her ideas by drawing. After she had tried to *draw* stories, and not succeeded, she took the better mode of writing, but in so small a hand that it is almost impossible to decipher what she wrote at this time.

But now to return to our quiet hour of rest after dinner. I soon observed that her habits of order were such that she could not go on with the conversation if a chair was out of its place; everything was arranged with delicate regularity. We talked over the old times of her childhood; of her elder sister's (Maria's) death—just like that of Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre*—of the desire (almost amounting to illness) of expressing herself in some way, writing or drawing; of her weakened eyesight, which prevented her doing anything for two years, from the age of seventeen to nineteen; of her being a governess; of her going to Brussels; whereupon I said I disliked Lucy Snowe, and we discussed M. Paul Emanuel; and I told her of ——'s admiration of *Shirley*, which pleased her, for the character of Shirley was meant for her sister Emily, about whom she is never tired of talking, nor I of listening. Emily must have been a remnant of the Titans, great-granddaughter of the giants who used to inhabit the earth. One day Miss Brontë brought down a rough, common-looking oil painting, done by her brother, of herself—a little rather prim-looking girl of eighteen—and the two other sisters, girls of sixteen and fourteen, with cropped hair, and sad, dreamy-looking eyes. . . . Emily had a great dog—half mastiff, half bulldog—so savage, etc. . . . This dog went to her funeral, walking side by side with her father; and then, to the day of its death, it slept at her room door, snuffing under it, and whining every morning.

We have generally had another walk before tea, which is at six; at half-past eight prayers; and by nine all the household are in bed, except ourselves. We sit up together till ten, or past; and after I go I hear Miss Brontë come down and walk up and down the room for an hour or so.

E. C. GASKELL.

Mrs. Gaskell thus continues in the *Life* her reminiscences of that visit :—

I asked her whether she had ever taken opium, as the description given of its effects in *Villette* was so exactly like what I had experienced—vivid and exaggerated presence of objects, of which the outlines were indistinct or lost in golden mist, etc. She replied that she had never, to her knowledge, taken a grain of it in any shape, but that she had followed the process she always adopted when she had to describe anything which had not fallen within her own experience ; she had thought intently on it for many and many a night before falling to sleep—wondering what it was like, or how it would be—till at length, sometimes after the progress of her story had been arrested at this one point for weeks, she wakened up in the morning with all clear before her, as if she had in reality gone through the experience, and then could describe it, word for word, as it had happened. I cannot account for this psychologically ; I only am sure that it was so because she said it.

Mrs.  
Gaskell's  
Narrative.

She made many inquiries as to Mrs. Stowe's personal appearance ; and it evidently harmonised well with some theory of hers to hear that the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was small and slight. It was another of her theories that no mixtures of blood produce such fine characters, mentally and morally, as the Scottish and English.

I recollect, too, her saying how acutely she dreaded a charge of plagiarism when, after she had written *Jane Eyre*, she read the thrilling effect of the mysterious scream at midnight in Mrs. Marsh's story of *The Deformed*. She also said that, when she read *The Neighbours*, she thought every one would fancy that she must have taken her conception of Jane Eyre's character from that of 'Francesca,' the narrator of Miss Bremer's story. For my own part, I cannot see the slightest resemblance between the two characters, and so I told her ; but she persisted in saying that Francesca was Jane Eyre married to a good-natured 'Bear' of a Swedish surgeon.

We went, not purposely, but accidentally, to see various poor people in our distant walks. From one we had borrowed an umbrella ; in the house of another we had taken shelter from a rough September storm. In all these cottages her quiet presence was known. At three miles from her home the chair was dusted



for her, with a kindly 'Sit ye down, Miss Brontë'; and she knew what absent or ailing members of the family to inquire after. Her quiet, gentle words, few though they might be, were evidently grateful to those Yorkshire ears. Their welcome to her, though rough and curt, was sincere and hearty.

We talked about the different courses through which life ran. She said in her own composed manner, as if she had accepted the theory as a fact, that she believed some were appointed beforehand to sorrow and much disappointment; that it did not fall to the lot of all—as Scripture told us—to have their lines fall in pleasant places; that it was well for those who had rougher paths to perceive that such was God's will concerning them, and try to moderate their expectations, leaving hope to those of a different doom, and seeking patience and resignation as the virtues they were to cultivate. I took a different view: I thought that human lots were more equal than she imagined; that to some happiness and sorrow came in strong patches of light and shadow (so to speak), while in the lives of others they were pretty equally blended throughout. She smiled, and shook her head, and said she was trying to school herself against ever anticipating any pleasure; that it was better to be brave and submit faithfully; there was some good reason, which we should know in time, why sorrow and disappointment were to be the lot of some on earth. It was better to acknowledge this, and face out the truth in a religious faith.

In connection with this conversation she named a little abortive plan which I had not heard of till then: how, in the previous July, she had been tempted to join some friends (a married couple and their child) in an excursion to Scotland. They set out joyfully; she with special gladness, for Scotland was a land which had its roots deep down in her imaginative affections, and the glimpse of two days at Edinburgh was all she had yet seen of it. But, at the first stage after Carlisle, the little yearling child was taken with a slight indisposition; the anxious parents fancied that strange diet had disagreed with it, and hurried back to their Yorkshire home as eagerly as, two or three days before, they had set their faces northward in hopes of a month's pleasant ramble.

We parted with many intentions, on both sides, of renewing very frequently the pleasure we had had in being together. We agreed that when she wanted bustle, or when I wanted quiet, we



were to let each other know, and exchange visits as occasion required.

I was aware that she had a great anxiety on her mind at this time; and being acquainted with its nature, I could not but deeply admire the patient docility which she displayed in her conduct towards her father.

## CHAPTER XXXII

## MARRIAGE

DURING these months Mr. Nicholls had not been forgotten. He had left Haworth, as we have seen, in May and had taken up duties at Kirk-Smeaton.<sup>1</sup> During the ensuing five or six months a Mr. De Renzi had assisted at Haworth. But Mr. Brontë missed the diligent care of his former curate, and was becoming restive, and doubtful perhaps if his passionate objection to his daughter's lover was altogether worldly-wise, not to say christian. Thus matters stood when Charlotte returned home from visiting Manchester and her old schoolmistress at Hornsea.

## Letter 648

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *October 8th*, 1853.

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I wished much to write to you immediately on my return home, but I found several little matters demanding attention, and have been kept busy till now. Mr. C—— could not come to preach the sermons, and consequently Mr. F—— was applied to in his stead; he arrived on Saturday and remained till yesterday.

My journey home would have been pleasant enough had it not been spoilt in the commencement by one slight incident. About half-way between Hull and Hornsea, a respectable-looking woman and her little girl were admitted into the coach. The child took her place opposite me: she had not sat long before, without any warning, or the slightest complaint of nausea, sickness seized her,

<sup>1</sup> Six miles south-east of Pontefract.

and the contents of her little stomach, consisting apparently of a milk breakfast, were unceremoniously deposited in my lap! Of course I alighted from the coach in a pretty mess, but succeeded in procuring water and a towel at the station, with which I managed to make my dress and cloak once more presentable.

I reached home about five o'clock in the afternoon, and the anxiety which is inseparable from a return after absence was pleasantly relieved by finding papa well and cheerful. He inquired after you with interest. I gave him your kind regards, and he specially charged me whenever I wrote to present his in return, and to say also that he hoped to see you at Haworth at the earliest date which shall be convenient to you.

The week I spent at Hornsea was a happy and pleasant week. Thank you, my dear Miss Wooler, for the true kindness which gave it its chief charm. I shall think of you often, especially when I walk out, and during the long evenings. I believe the weather has at length taken a turn: to-day is beautifully fine. I wish I were at Hornsea and just now preparing to go out with you to walk on the sands or along the lake.

I would not have you to fatigue yourself with writing to me when you are not inclined, but yet I should be glad to hear from you some day ere long. When you *do* write, tell me how you liked *The Experience of Life*, and whether you have read *The Newcomes*, and what you think of it.—Believe me, always yours, with true affection and respect,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 649

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *Thursday Morning.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I duly and safely reached home with my purchases at about 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon. I found papa, etc., very well. The maps, the carpet and rug, all gave satisfaction, the other purchases I kept from observation, but they will be appreciated I dare say when they appear in their proper time and place. I hope you also reached home all right, but I fear the fatigue you underwent will leave its effects to-day. It was not a very good preparation for the long walk to Scholes.

Write to me soon and tell me how you are. I have some head-

ache to-day, but not violent ; a general jaded, weary feeling was to be expected. With love to your mother and Mercy, and kind regards to Mr. Clapham.—I am, dear Ellen, yours, fagged but faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

### Letter 650

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH.

DEAR ELLEN,—I find I cannot have the gig till Friday ; on that day it shall (D.V.) be at the station at the hour you name, and then I hope it will bring you safe to me. The prospect of seeing you already cheers.

One reason which I shall tell you when you come partly reconciles me to this temporary delay. If I do not hear anything to the contrary, I shall consider the matter settled. May no hindrance arise either here or at Brookroyd. Kind regards to all. Dear Nell, yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

### Letter 651

TO W. S. WILLIAMS

*December 6th, 1853.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I forwarded last week a box of return books to Cornhill, which I trust arrived safely. To-day I received the *Edinburgh Guardian*,<sup>1</sup> for which I thank you.

Do not trouble yourself to select or send any more books. These courtesies must cease some day, and I would rather give them up than wear them out.—Believe me, yours sincerely,  
C. BRONTË.

### Letter 652

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *December 12th.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I wonder how you are spending these long winter evenings. Alone, probably, like me. The thought

<sup>1</sup> This article was by Sir John Skelton, K.C.B. (1831-1897), who, under the pseudonym of 'Shirley,' made a considerable reputation in literature. He was Chairman of the Local Government Board for Scotland.



often crosses me, as I sit by myself—how pleasant it would be if you lived within a walking distance, and I could go to you sometimes, or have you to come and spend a day and night with me. Yes; I did enjoy that week at Hornsea. I remember it with pleasure, and I look forward to spring as the period when you will fulfil your promise of coming to visit me.

I fear you must be very solitary at Hornsea. How hard to some people of the world it would seem to live your life—how utterly impossible to live it with a serene spirit and an unsoured disposition! It seems wonderful to me, because you are not like Mrs. R——, phlegmatic and impenetrable, but received from nature feelings of the very finest edge. Such feelings, when they are locked up, sometimes damage the mind and temper. They don't with you. It must be partly principle, partly self-discipline, which keeps you as you are.

Do not think that your kind wish respecting Mr. Nicholls and myself does not touch or influence me; it does both; yet I hardly know how to take the step you recommend. C. BRONTË.

## Letter 653

TO SYDNEY DOBELL

HAWORTH, NEAR KEIGHLEY, *February 3rd, 1854.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I can hardly tell you how glad I am to have an opportunity of explaining that taciturnity to which you allude. Your letter came at a period of danger and care, when my father was very ill, and I could not leave his bedside. I answered no letters at that time, and yours was one of three or four that, when leisure returned to me, and I came to consider their purport, it seemed to me that the time was past for answering them, and I laid them finally aside. If you remember, you asked me to go to London; it was too late either to go or to decline. I was sure you had left London. One circumstance you mentioned—your wife's illness—which I have thought of many a time, and wondered whether she is better. In your present note you do not refer to her, but I trust her health has long ere now been quite restored.

*Balder* arrived safely. I looked at him, before cutting his leaves, with singular pleasure. Remembering well his elder brother, the potent *Roman*, it was natural to give a cordial

welcome to a fresh scion of the same house and race. I have read him. He impresses me thus: He teems with power; I found in him a wild wealth of life, but I thought his favourite and favoured child would bring his sire trouble—would make his heart ache. It seemed to me that his strength and beauty were not so much those of Joseph, the pillar of Jacob's age, as of the Prodigal Son, who troubled his father, though he always kept his love.

How is it that while the first-born of genius often brings honour the second almost as often proves a source of depression and care? I could almost prophesy that your third will atone for any anxiety inflicted by this his immediate predecessor.

There is power in that character of 'Balder,' and to me a certain horror. Did you mean it to embody, along with force, any of the special defects of the artistic character? It seems to me that those defects were never thrown out in stronger lines. I did not and could not think you meant to offer him as your cherished ideal of the true great poet; I regard him as a vividly coloured picture of inflated self-esteem, almost frantic aspiration; of a nature that has made a Moloch of intellect—offered up, in pagan fires, the natural affections—sacrificed the heart to the brain. Do we not all know that true greatness is simple, self-oblivious, prone to unambitious, unselfish attachments? I am certain you feel this truth in your heart of hearts.

But if the critics err now (as yet I have seen none of their lucubrations) you shall one day set them right in the second part of *Balder*. You shall show them that you too know—better, perhaps, than they—that the truly great man is too sincere in his affections to grudge a sacrifice; too much absorbed in his work to talk loudly about it; too intent on finding the best way to accomplish what he undertakes to think great things of himself—the instrument. And if God places seeming impediments in his way—if his duties sometimes seem to hamper his powers—he feels keenly, perhaps writhes under, the slow torture of hindrance and delay; but if there be a true man's heart in his breast he can bear, submit, wait patiently.

Whoever speaks to me of *Balder*—though I live too retired a life to come often in the way of comment—shall be answered according to your suggestion and my own impression. Equity demands that you shall be your own interpreter. Good-bye for the present, and believe me, faithfully and gratefully,

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

## Letter 654

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

WELLINGTON, *February 24th, '54.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I got a letter from you some time ago Pr. *Constantin*, dated Brookroyd, Aug. 12/53, just about six months ago. Thank you for your trouble concerning my dress and bonnet. You may have the satisfaction of knowing it was not in vain, as they both turned out wonderfully well, and I shall certainly accept your kind offer and get another in time for next winter but one. How ever did you manage to make the dress so heavy? and then call it not a winter dress! It fitted well, tho' it was too long; a very small fault. The bonnet just suited me. The thermometer just now rises to about 80° every day, wherefore the fine things are put by. I shall bring them out in due time. You cannot imagine the importance they give; the peak behind is the object of universal admiration.

I am glad you approved of my lecture to Joe on diet; tho' you are mistaken in thinking that I follow my own advice. In summer I never eat six dinners in the week, seldom more than three. My health suffers less from low living than it would from biliousness were I to eat more. Luckily winter comes, and I can keep up my strength and have an easy mind and clear head at the same time I seldom taste anything stronger than tea, either in hot weather or cold.

You talk wonderful nonsense about Charlotte Brontë in your letter. What do you mean about 'bearing her position so long, and enduring to the end'? and still better, 'bearing our lot, whatever it is.' If it's Charlotte's lot to be married, shouldn't she bear that too? or does your strange morality mean that she should refuse to ameliorate her lot when it is in her power. How would she be inconsistent with herself in marrying? Because she considers her own pleasure? If this is so new for her to do, it is high time she began to make it more common. It is an outrageous exaction to expect her to give up her choice in a matter so important, and I think her to blame in having been hitherto so yielding that her friends can think of making such an impudent demand. . . . Your account of your trip to Yarmouth is amusing. I am right glad you came back again.

All your gossip is very interesting. Mrs. Joe Taylor sends me very little, being used, I think, to spend her time too much at home. Perhaps when her health improves she will take more interest in her neighbours.

I wish you could see how busy I am going to be. I have got such a lot of things coming. Finery of all kinds. It will take me a fortnight's hard work to get them all arranged and ticketed. And then the people that will come to see them! I always find myself wondering at these people with one eye, while I wait on them with the other. It gives them such evident pain to see anything they can't buy, and it is so impossible for them not to look at the most expensive things, even when they can't buy any but the cheapest. Then the tricks they play on their husbands' head, or heart, or purse, to get the money! And then the coolness with which they'll say they don't care a bit about it, only thought they might as well have it! There are some silk mantles coming, about which more lies will be told than would make a lawyer's fortune, to me, their husbands, friends, and neighbours. Don't think all my customers answer to this description. Yet it's wonderful how many do.

I've got an addition to my store, by which you may see I'm getting on in the world. It has 20 feet frontage and is 16 feet deep. I could let it for £50 or £60 Pr. an., but then the ground is not paid for. I intend to pay for it this winter. My coming home seems just as far off as ever; that is, two or three years more. In that time I expect this town and colony to advance wonderfully. There will be steam communication *viâ* Panama—perhaps I'll come home that way. There will be a large export of wool to England and kai—provisions, to Australia. Then there are signs of a mania for emigration to N. Zealand coming on—a sort of fever which will injure those who get it, but will benefit the colony generally. All settlers of course encourage this mania, as it is to their own advantage. Indeed, so long as people come of their judgment there is no doubt they will do well. Labouring men get six shillings a day, and every other kind of work is paid in proportion. But once let it be understood that a man can get rich just by coming here and we shall have such cargoes of helpless, silly people!

There was a family of that kind came here once and settled in the country. They brought a man-servant for the gentleman and a maid for the lady and a few more servants. They went into the



country, about two days' journey from Wellington, after making themselves remarkable for a while in the town with their extraordinary ringlets, ribbons, fly-away hats, and frippery of all kinds. After a few months I heard they were in great distress—nearly starving. All their servants had left them, and they were all ill in bed. 'Why, what's the matter with them?' 'Oh, the mosquitoes have bitten them so!'

I wish you would send me some more particular account of yourself in your next letter. You write twice a year and I quite lose the thread of your wanderings between the letters. One newspaper sent me is addressed to you at *Oundle* vicarage. Where in the world is *Oundle*? And what have you been doing there? You appear to travel about a good deal. When I see you again you will have travelled much more than I have, though people won't think so. You don't mention Miss Wooler. Have you seen her, or rather do you see her when you come home from your peregrinations?

Good-bye, dear Ellen, I have written to the last minute, March 3d/54.—Yours affectionately,

MARY TAYLOR.

## Letter 655

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March 1st, 1854.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I am sorry to hear that Mrs. Richard Nussey has had a paralytic stroke. Is this true, or is it an exaggerated account? At her age one would scarcely have expected an attack of that nature, but I believe paralysis attacks more persons and younger persons than formerly. A clergyman of not more than thirty-five, in the neighbourhood of Skipton, is entirely disabled from duty by the effects of a paralytic stroke. How does your mother continue to get on? Papa has so far borne the winter surprisingly well on the whole, though now and then he still complains of muscular weakness, and other slight symptoms which renew anxiety. Still I have more reason for gratitude than fear in his case. Your sister Ann it seems has consulted Mr. Teale—is she better for his advice? Last, but not least, how are you yourself?—Yours affectionately,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 656

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March 7th, '54.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I am very glad to hear Mrs. Richard is pronounced out of danger. It is well, too, that the brain has so far escaped serious injury; it seems to me perhaps the worst of all dooms for the death of the mind to anticipate that of the body, yet, sometimes when these attacks fall chiefly on the nervous system a state of irritation follows which is found very trying, not only for the poor patient, but most especially for friends. You do not say that such is the case in the present instance, and I hope it will not prove so. . . .

So far I have been so favoured as to escape severe colds, but my headaches, etc., still at times harass me and keep me thin. I am truly glad to hear that your mother, Mr. Clapham, and Mercy are well, and that your sister Ann is better. Mr. Teale will do a good deed if he succeeds in curing her. Papa still continues well.—Believe me, my dear Ellen, yours affectionately,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 657

TO LÆTITIA WHEELWRIGHT

HAWORTH, *March 18th, 1854.*

MY DEAR LÆTITIA,—I was very glad to see your handwriting again; it is, I believe, a year since I heard from you. Again and again you have recurred to my thoughts lately, and I was beginning to have some sad presages as to the cause of your silence. Your letter happily does away with all these; it brings, on the whole, good tidings both of your papa, mamma, your sister, and, last but not least, your dear respected English self.

My dear father has borne the severe winter very well, a circumstance for which I feel the more thankful, as he had many weeks of very precarious health last summer, following an attack from which he suffered last June, and which for a few hours deprived him totally of sight, though neither his mind, speech, nor even his powers of motion were in the least affected. I can hardly tell you how thankful I was, dear Lætitia, when, after that dreary and almost despairing interval of utter darkness, some gleam of

daylight became visible to him once more. I had feared that paralysis had seized the optic nerve. A sort of mist remained for a long time, and indeed his vision is not yet perfectly clear, but he can read, write, and walk about, and he preaches *twice* every Sunday, the curate only reading the prayers. *You* can well understand how earnestly I pray that sight may be spared him to the end; he so dreads the privation of blindness. His mind is just as strong and active as ever, and politics interest him as they do *your* papa. The Czar, the war, the alliance between France and England—into all these things he throws himself heart and soul. They seem to carry him back to his comparatively young days, and to renew the excitement of the last great European struggle. Of course, my father's sympathies, and mine too, are all with justice and Europe against tyranny and Russia.

Circumstanced as I have been, you will comprehend that I had neither the leisure nor inclination to go from home much during the past year. I spent a week with Mrs. Gaskell in the spring, and a fortnight with some other friends more recently, and that includes the whole of my visiting since I saw you last. My life is indeed very uniform and retired, more so than is quite healthful either for mind or body; yet I feel reason for often renewed feelings of gratitude in the sort of support which still comes and cheers me from time to time. My health, though not unbroken, is, I sometimes fancy, rather stronger on the whole than it was three years ago; headache and dyspepsia are my worse ailments. Whether I shall come up to town this season for a few days I do not yet know; but if I do I shall hope to call in Phillimore Place. With kindest remembrances to your papa, mamma, and sisters,—I am, dear Lætitia, affectionately yours,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 658

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*March 22nd, 1854.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I put off writing yesterday because I had a headache; I have it again to-day, not severe, but depressing. However, I will write a few lines, and if they are inefficient you will know the reason.

Miss Wooler kindly asked me likewise to go and see her at Hornsea, but I had a prior engagement this month, which, how-

ever, it seems very doubtful whether I shall keep. It would have given one true pleasure to have joined Miss Wooler had not my previous promise stood in the way.

I was very glad to hear of Miss Cockhill's engagement; offer her my sincere congratulations on the subject. I don't know John Battye, but if he only prove as kind a husband as I feel sure she will be a good wife, they have a good chance of happiness.

Mrs. R. Nussey's convalescence was good news also. I trust she will now steadily improve, and many years may elapse before she has any return. The third stroke of paralysis or apoplexy is generally said to be fatal, but there is an instance in this neighbourhood of three strokes occurring within a period of twenty years, and the patient lives still, and is indeed almost entirely recovered from the effects of the third attack. One leg only is stiff and unmanageable, but he can walk pretty well.

Be sure and look after yourself, dear Ellen; mind cold and the night-air. Tell me if you are in good spirits when you write again.—Yours affectionately,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 659

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March 28th, '54.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—The enclosure in yours of yesterday puzzled me at first, for I did not immediately recognise my own handwriting; when I did, the sensation was one of consternation and vexation, as the letter ought by all means to have gone on Friday. It was intended to relieve him of great anxiety. However, I trust he will get it to-day, and on the whole, when I think it over, I can only be thankful that the mistake was no worse, and did not throw the letter into the hands of some indifferent and unscrupulous person. I wrote it after some days of indisposition and uneasiness, and when I felt weak and unfit to write. While writing to him, I was at the same time intending to answer your note, which I suppose accounts for the confusion of ideas, shown in the mixed and blundering address.

I wish you could come about Easter rather than at another time, for this reason—Mr. Nicholls, if not prevented, proposes coming over then. I suppose he will stay at Mr. Grant's as he has



done two or three times before, but he will be frequently coming here, which would enliven your visit a little. Perhaps, too, he might take a walk with us occasionally. Altogether it would be a little change; such as, you know, I could not always offer.

If all be well he will come under different circumstances to any that have attended his visits before; were it otherwise I should not ask you to meet him, for when aspects are gloomy and unpropitious, the fewer there are to suffer from the cloud the better.

He was here in January and was then received, but not pleasantly. I trust it will be a little different now.

Papa breakfasts in bed and has not yet risen; his bronchitis is still troublesome. I had a bad week last week, but am greatly better now, for my mind is a little relieved, though very sedate and rising only to expectations the most moderate.

Sometime, perhaps in May, I may hope to come to Brookroyd, but as you will understand from what I have now stated, I could not come before.

Think it over, dear Nell, and come to Haworth if you can. Write as soon as you can decide.—Yours affectionately,

C. BRONTË

## Letter 660

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 1st, '54.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—You certainly were right in your second interpretation of my note; I am too well aware of the dulness of Haworth for any visitor, not to be glad to avail myself of the chance of offering even a slight change. But this morning my little plans have been disarranged by an intimation that Mr. Nicholls is coming on Monday. I thought to put him off, but have not succeeded. As Easter now consequently seems an unfavourable period both from your point of view and mine, we will adjourn it till a better opportunity offers. Meantime, I thank you, dear Ellen, for your kind offer to come in case I wanted you. Papa is still very far from well, his cough very troublesome and a good deal of inflammatory action in the chest. To-day he seems somewhat better than yesterday, and I earnestly hope the improvement may continue.

With kind regards to your mother and all at Brookroyd,—I am,  
dear Ellen, yours affectionately,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 661

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *April 11th*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—Thank you for the collar ; it is very pretty, and I will wear it for the sake of her who made and gave it.

Mr. Nicholls came on Monday, and was here all last week. Matters have progressed thus since July. He renewed his visit in September, but then matters so fell out that I saw little of him. He continued to write. The correspondence pressed on my mind. I grew very miserable in keeping it from papa. At last sheer pain made me gather courage to break it. I told all. It was very hard and rough work at the time, but the issue after a few days was that I obtained leave to continue the communication. Mr. Nicholls came in January ; he was ten days in the neighbourhood. I saw much of him. I had stipulated with papa for opportunity to become better acquainted. I had it, and all I learnt inclined me to esteem and affection. Still papa was very, very hostile, bitterly unjust.

I told Mr. Nicholls the great obstacle that lay in his way. He has persevered. The result of this, his last visit, is, that papa's consent is gained, that his respect, I believe, is won, for Mr. Nicholls has in all things proved himself disinterested and forbearing. Certainly I must respect him, nor can I withhold from him more than mere cool respect. In fact, dear Ellen, I am engaged.

Mr. Nicholls, in the course of a few months, will return to the curacy of Haworth. I stipulated that I would not leave papa, and to papa himself I proposed a plan of residence which should maintain his seclusion and convenience uninvaded and in a pecuniary sense bring him gain instead of loss. What seemed at one time impossible is now arranged, and papa begins really to take a pleasure in the prospect.

For myself, dear Ellen, while thankful to One who seems to have guided me through much difficulty, much and deep distress and perplexity of mind, I am still very calm, very inexpectant. What I taste of happiness is of the soberest order. I trust to love my husband. I am grateful for his tender love to me. I believe him to be an affectionate, a conscientious, a high-principled man ; and if, with all this, I should yield to regrets, that

fine talents, congenial tastes and thoughts are not added, it seems to me I should be most presumptuous and thankless.

Providence offers me this destiny. Doubtless then it is the best for me. Nor do I shrink from wishing those dear to me one not less happy.

It is possible that our marriage may take place in the course of the summer. Mr. Nicholls wishes it to be in July. He spoke of you with great kindness, and said he hoped you would be at our wedding. I said I thought of having no other bridesmaid. Did I say rightly? I mean the marriage to be literally as quiet as possible.

Do not mention these things just yet. I mean to write to Miss Wooler shortly. Good-bye. There is a strange half-sad feeling in making these announcements. The whole thing is something other than imagination paints it beforehand; cares, fears, come mixed inextricably with hopes. I trust yet to talk the matter over with you. Often last week I wished for your presence, and said so to Mr. Nicholls, Arthur as I now call him, but he said it was the only time and place when he could not have wished to see you. Good-bye.—Yours affectionately,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 662

TO MISS WOOLER

HAWORTH, *April 12th.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—The truly kind interest which you have always taken in my affairs makes me feel that it is due to you to transmit an early communication on a subject respecting which I have already consulted you more than once. I must tell you then that since I wrote last papa's mind has gradually come round to a view very different to that which he once took; and that after some correspondence, and as the result of a visit Mr. Nicholls paid here about a week ago, it was agreed that he was to resume the curacy of Haworth, as soon as papa's present assistant is provided with a situation, and in due course of time he is to be received as an inmate into this house.

It gives me unspeakable content to see that now my father has once admitted this new view of the case he dwells on it very complacently. In all arrangements his convenience and seclusion will be scrupulously respected. Mr. Nicholls seems deeply to feel

the wish to comfort and sustain his declining years. I think from Mr. Nicholls's character I may depend on this not being a mere transitory, impulsive feeling, but rather that it will be accepted steadily as a duty, and discharged tenderly as an office of affection. The destiny which Providence in His goodness and wisdom seems to offer me will not, I am aware, be generally regarded as brilliant, but I trust I see in it some germs of real happiness. I trust the demands of both feeling and duty will be in some measure reconciled by the step in contemplation. It is Mr. Nicholls's wish that the marriage should take place this summer; he urges the month of July, but that seems very soon.

When you write to me, tell me how you are. . . . I have now decidedly declined the visit to London; the ensuing three months will bring me abundance of occupation; I could not afford to throw away a month. . . . Papa has just got a letter from the good and dear Bishop, which has touched and pleased us much; it expresses so cordial an approbation of Mr. Nicholls's return to Haworth (respecting which he was consulted), and such kind gratification at the domestic arrangements which are to ensue. It seems his penetration discovered the state of things when he was here in June 1853.

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 663

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 15th, '54.*

MY OWN DEAR NELL,—I hope to see you somewhere about the second week in May

The Manchester visit is still hanging over my head. I have deferred it, and deferred it, but have finally promised to go about the beginning of next month. I shall only stay three days, then I spend two or three days at Hunsworth, then come to Brookroyd. The three visits must be compressed into the space of a fortnight, if possible.

I suppose I shall have to go to Leeds. My purchases cannot be either expensive or extensive. You must just resolve in your head the bonnets and dresses; something that can be turned to decent use and worn after the wedding-day will be best I think.

I wrote immediately to Miss Wooler and received a truly kind letter from her this morning. If you think she would like to come to the marriage, I will not fail to ask her.



Papa's mind seems wholly changed about the matter, and he has said both to me and when I was not there, how much happier he feels since he allowed all to be settled. It is a wonderful relief for me to hear him treat the thing rationally, to talk over with him themes on which once I dared not touch. He is rather anxious things should get forward now, and takes quite an interest in the arrangement of preliminaries. His health improves daily, though this east wind still keeps up a slight irritation in the throat and chest.

The feeling which had been disappointed in papa was ambition, paternal pride; ever a restless feeling, as we all know. Now that this unquiet spirit is exorcised, justice, which was once quite forgotten, is once more listened to; and affection, I hope, resumes some power.

My hope is that in the end this arrangement will turn out more truly to papa's advantage than any other it was in my power to achieve. Mr. Nicholls in his last letter refers touchingly to his earnest desire to prove his gratitude to papa, by offering support and consolation to his declining age. This will not be mere talk with him; he is no talker, no dealer in professions.

Dear Nell, I will write no more at present. You can of course tell your mother, Mrs. Clapham, etc., the Healds, too, if you judge proper: indeed, I now leave the communication to you. I know you will not obtrude it where no interest would be taken.—  
Yours affectionately,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 664

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*April 28th, 1854.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I have delayed writing till I could give you some clear notion of my movements. If all be well, I go to Manchester on the 1st of May. Thence, on Thursday, to Huns-worth till Monday, when (D.V.) I come to Brookroyd. I must be at home by the close of the week. Papa, thank God! continues to improve much. He preached twice on Sunday and again on Wednesday and was not tired; his mind and mood are different to what they were, so much more cheerful and quiet. I trust the illusions of ambition are quite dissipated, and that he really sees it is better to relieve a suffering and faithful heart, to secure its fidelity, a solid good; than unfeelingly to abandon one who is

truly attached to his interest as well as mine, and pursue some vain empty shadow.

I thank you, dear Ellen, for your kind invitation to Mr. Nicholls. He was asked likewise to Manchester and Hunsworth. I would not have opposed his coming had there been no real obstacle to the arrangement; certain little awkwardnesses of feeling I would have tried to get over for the sake of introducing him to old friends; but it so happens that he cannot leave on account of his Rector's absence. Mr. C. will be in town with his family till June, and he always stipulates that his Curate shall remain at Kirk-Smeaton while he is away.

How did you get on at the Oratorio? And what did Miss Wooler say to the proposal of being at the wedding? I have many points to discuss when I see you. I hope your mother and all are well. With kind remembrances to them, and true love to you, I am, dear Nell, faithfully yours, C. BRONTË.

When you write, address me at Mrs. Gaskell's, Plymouth Grove, Manchester.

## Letter 665

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HUNSWORTH, *May 6th*, 1854.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I came to Hunsworth on Thursday afternoon, and if all be well, I hope to come to Brookroyd on Monday just in time for tea.

I leave you to judge by your own feelings whether I long to see you or not.

Amelia tells me you are looking well. She tells me also that I am not; rather ugly as usual: but never mind that, dear Ellen, as indeed you never did. On the whole I feel very decently at present, and within the last fortnight have had much respite from headache.

You are kind to be so much in earnest in wishing Mr. Nicholls to come to Brookroyd, and I am sorry that circumstances do not favour such a step, but knowing how matters stood, I did not repeat the proposal to him, for I thought it would be like tempting him to forget duty.

No more at present, dear Nell, except love to all.—Yours affectionately, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 666

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *May 14th*, 1854.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I took the time of the Leeds and Skipton trains from Mr. C.'s February Time-Table, and when I got to Leeds, found myself all wrong; the trains are changed, one had that moment left the station, indeed it was just steaming away, there was not another till a quarter after five o'clock; so I had just four hours to sit and twirl my thumbs. I got over the time somehow, but I was vexed to think how much more pleasantly I might have spent it at Brookroyd. It was just seven when I reached home. I found papa well. He has already given Mr. de Renzi notice. That gentleman is still perfectly smooth and fair spoken to papa. He never told him a word of what he has written to Mr. Nicholls.

Dear Ellen, I could not leave you with a very quiet mind, or take away a satisfied feeling about you. Not that I think that bad cough lodged in a dangerous part, but it wears you and makes you look ill. Take care, do, dear Nell, observe precaution. Believe me it does not do at present to be exposed to variations of temperature. I send the [white lace] mantle with this, but I have made up my mind not to let you have the cushion [pattern] now, lest you should sit stitching over it too closely. It will do any time, and whenever it comes it will be your present all the same. Write soon, and believe me, faithfully yours,

C. BRONTË.

Remember me to all at Brookroyd, and thank them for their kindness of word and deed.

## Letter 667

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*May 22nd*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—I wonder how you are, and whether that harassing cough is better. Be scrupulously cautious about undue exposure. Just now, dear Ellen, an hour's inadvertence might cause you to be really ill. So once again, take care. Since I came home I have been very busy stitching; the little new room

is got into order, and the green and white curtains are up ; they exactly suit the papering, and look neat and clean enough. I had a letter a day or two since announcing that Mr. Nicholls comes to-morrow. I feel anxious about him, more anxious on one point than I dare quite express to myself. It seems he has again been suffering sharply from his rheumatic affection. I hear this not from himself, but from another quarter. He was ill while I was at Manchester and Brookroyd. He uttered no complaint to me, dropped no hint on the subject. Alas! he was hoping he had got the better of it, and I know how this contradiction of his hopes will sadden him. For unselfish reasons he did so earnestly wish this complaint might not become chronic. I fear, I fear. But, however, I mean to stand by him now, whether in weal or woe. This liability to rheumatic pain was one of the strong arguments used against the marriage. It did not weigh somehow. If he is doomed to suffer, it seems that so much the more will he need care and help. And yet the ultimate possibilities of such a case are appalling. You remember your aunt. Well, come what may, God help and strengthen both him and me. I look forward to to-morrow with a mixture of impatience and anxiety. Poor fellow ! I want to see with my own eyes how he is.

It is getting late and dark. Write soon, dear Ellen. Good-night and God bless you.—Yours affectionately,

C. BRONTË.

## Letter 668

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *May 27th*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—Your letter was very welcome, and I am glad and thankful to learn you are better. Still, beware of presuming on the improvement, don't let it make you careless. Mr. Nicholls has just left me. Your hopes were not ill founded about his illness. At first I was thoroughly frightened. However, inquiring gradually relieved me. In short, I soon discovered that my business was, instead of sympathy, to rate soundly. The patient had wholesome treatment while he was at Haworth, and went away singularly better ; perfectly unreasonable, however, on some points, as his fallible sex are not ashamed to be.

Man is indeed an amazing piece of mechanism when you see, so to speak, the full weakness of what he calls his strength.



There is not a female child above the age of eight but might rebuke him for spoilt petulance of his wilful nonsense. I bought a border for the table-cloth and have put it on.

Good-bye, dear Ellen, write again soon and mind and give a bulletin.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 669

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *June 7th*, 1854.

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I am very glad and thankful to hear you continue better. I was very miserable about papa again some days ago. While the weather was so sultry and electric, about a week since, he was suddenly attacked with deafness, and complained of other symptoms which showed the old tendency to the head. His spirits too became excessively depressed, it was all I could do to keep him up, and soon I was sad and apprehensive myself. The change to cooler weather has suited him, the temporary deafness has quite disappeared, and his head is again clear and cool. I can only earnestly trust he will continue better. Mr. de Renzi's aim is to leave papa without curate for some weeks. Good-bye for the present.

My kind regards to all at Brookroyd. Thank you for ordering another fifty cards.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

## Letter 670

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*June 12th*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—Papa preached twice to-day as well and as strongly as ever. It is strange how he varies, how soon he is depressed and how soon revived. It makes me feel so thankful when he is better. I am thankful too that you are stronger, dear Nell. My worthy acquaintance at Kirk-Smeaton refuses to acknowledge himself better yet. I am uneasy about not writing to Miss Wooler. I fear she will think me negligent, while I am only busy and bothered. I want to clear up my needlework a little, and have been sewing against time since I was at Brookroyd. Mr. Nicholls hindered me a full week.

I like the card very well, but not the envelope. I should like a perfectly plain envelope with a silver initial.

I got my dresses from Halifax a day or two since, but have not had time to have them unpacked, so I don't know what they are like.

Next time I write, I hope to be able to give you clear information, and to beg you to come here without further delay. Good-bye, dear Nell.—Yours faithfully,  
C. BRONTË.

## Letter 671

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*June 16th, '54.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—Can you come next Wednesday or Thursday? I am afraid circumstances will compel me to agree to an earlier day than I wished. I sadly wished to defer it till the 2nd week in July, but I fear it must be sooner, the 1st week in July, possibly the last week in June, for Mr. de Renzi has succeeded in obtaining his holiday, and whereas his quarter will not be up till the 20th of August, he leaves on the 25th June. This gives rise to much trouble and many difficulties as you may imagine, and papa's whole anxiety now is to get the business over. Mr. Nicholls with his usual trustworthiness takes all the trouble of providing substitutes on his own shoulders.

I write to Miss Wooler to-day. Would it not be better, dear Nell, if you and she could arrange to come to Haworth on the same day, arrive at Keighley by the same train, then I could order the cab to meet you at the station and bring you on with your luggage. In this hot weather, walking would be quite out of the question, either for you or her, and I know she would persist in doing it if left to herself, and arrive half-killed. I thought it better to mention this arrangement to *you* first, and then if you liked it, you could settle the time, etc., with Miss Wooler and let me know. Be sure to give me timely information that I may write to the Devonshire Arms about the cab.

Mr. Nicholls is a kind considerate fellow, with all his masculine faults in some points; he enters into my wishes about having the thing done quietly in a way which makes me grateful, and if nobody interferes and spoils his arrangements, he will manage so that not a soul in Haworth shall be aware of the day. He is so thoughtful too about 'the ladies,' *i.e.* you and Miss Wooler,—anticipating the very arrangements I was going to propose to him about providing for your departure, etc.

He and Mr. Sowden will come to Mr. Grant's the evening before ; write me a note to let me know they are there. Precisely at 8 in the morning they will be in the Church, and there we are to meet them. Mr. and Mrs. Grant are asked to the breakfast, not the ceremony.

Let me hear from you as soon as possible, dear Nell, and believe me faithfully yours,

C. BRONTË.

I had almost forgotten to mention about the envelopes. Mr. Nicholls says I have ordered far too few, he thinks sixty will be wanted. Is it too late to remedy this error? There is no end to his string of parson-friends. My own list I have not made out.

Charlotte Brontë's list of friends, to whom wedding-cards were to be sent, is in her own handwriting, and is not without interest :—

#### SEND CARDS TO

The Rev. W. Morgan, Rectory, Hulcott, Aylesbury, Bucks.  
 Joseph Branwell, Esq., Thamar Terrace, Launceston, Cornwall.  
 Dr. Wheelwright, 29 Phillimore Place, Kensington, London.  
 George Smith, Esq., 65 Cornhill, London.  
 Mrs. and Misses Smith, 65 Cornhill, London.  
 W. S. Williams, Esq., 65 Cornhill, London.  
 R. Monckton Milnes, Esq.  
 Mrs. Gaskell, Plymouth Grove, Manchester.  
 Francis Bennoch, Esq., Park, Blackheath, London.  
 George Taylor, Esq., Stanbury.  
 Mrs. and Miss Taylor.  
 H. Merrall, Esq., Lea Sykes, Haworth.  
 E. Merrall, Esq., Ebor House, Haworth.  
 R. Butterfield, Esq., Woodlands, Haworth.  
 R. Thomas, Esq., Haworth.  
 J. Pickles, Esq., Brow Top, Haworth.  
 Wooler Family.  
 Brookroyd.<sup>1</sup>

Here is Mrs. Gaskell's account of the wedding. One

<sup>1</sup> The Nusseys.

wishes she had actually been present as erroneously stated by one of her biographers :—<sup>1</sup>

It was fixed that the marriage was to take place on June 29. Her two friends arrived at Haworth Parsonage the day before; and the long summer afternoon and evening were spent by Charlotte in thoughtful arrangements for the morrow, and for her father's comfort during her absence from home. When all was finished—the trunk packed, the morning's breakfast arranged, the wedding dress laid out—just at bedtime, Mr. Brontë announced his intention of stopping at home while the others went to church. What was to be done? Who was to give the bride away? There were only to be the officiating clergyman,<sup>2</sup> the bride and bridegroom, the bridesmaid, and Miss Wooler present. The Prayer Book was referred to; and there it was seen that the rubric enjoins that the minister shall receive 'the woman from her father's or *friend's* hand,' and that nothing is specified as to the sex of the 'friend.' So Miss Wooler, ever kind in emergency, volunteered to give her old pupil away.

The news of the wedding had slipt abroad before the little party came out of church, and many old and humble friends were there, seeing her look 'like a snowdrop,' as they say. Her dress was white embroidered muslin, with a lace mantle, and white bonnet trimmed with green leaves, which perhaps might suggest the resemblance to the pale wintry flower.

The following letter was written on her wedding-day, June 29, 1854 :—

### Letter 672

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*Thursday Evening.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I scribble one hasty line just to say that after a pleasant enough journey, we have got safely to Conway; the evening is wet and wild, though the day was fair, chiefly, with

<sup>1</sup> Mr. A. W. Ward, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The error is repeated in the Introduction to the Knutsford edition of the *Works of Mrs. Gaskell*.

<sup>2</sup> The officiating priest was the Rev. Sutcliffe Sowden. He and his brother, the Rev. George Sowden (1822-1899), canon of Wakefield Cathedral and vicar of Hebden Bridge, Yorks, were the most intimate friends of Mr. Nicholls at the time of his marriage.



some gleams of sunshine. However, we are sheltered in a comfortable Inn. My cold is not worse. If you get this scrawl tomorrow and write by return, direct to me at the Post Office, Bangor, and I may get it on Monday. Say how you and Miss Wooler got home. Give my kindest and most grateful love to Miss Wooler whenever you write. On Monday, I think, we cross the Channel. No more at present.—Yours faithfully and lovingly,  
C. B. N.

The next letter is dated from Banagher, King's County, Ireland, whither the pair wended their way after visiting Killarney, Glengarriff, and Cork. At Banagher lived the Bells, Mr. Nicholls's uncle and aunt, and Charlotte Brontë stayed on her honeymoon in the very house in which I visited Mr. Nicholls forty years later. This letter was once in the possession of the editor, but is now lost, and can only be given in the fragment copied by Mrs. Gaskell.

### Letter 673

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

BANAGHER, *July —, 1854.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Some parts exceeded all I had ever imagined. . . . I must say I like my new relations. My dear husband, too, appears in a new light in his own country. More than once I have had deep pleasure in hearing his praises on all sides. Some of the old servants and followers of the family tell me I am a most fortunate person; for that I have got one of the best gentlemen in the country. . . . I trust I feel thankful to God for having enabled me to make what seems a right choice; and I pray to be enabled to repay as I ought the affectionate devotion of a truthful, honourable man.

C. B. NICHOLLS.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

## MARRIED LIFE

THE married life of Charlotte Brontë lasted but nine months in all, but that, had her health been preserved, it was destined to be happy there can be no doubt. It has often been suggested that Mr. Nicholls discouraged her literary effort, but this he strenuously denied, and his statement to the contrary is endorsed by the discovery of sundry 'openings' to stories written during these few months. It is further urged—although such criticisms are always impertinences—that, after all, he was not the ideal husband. If women of intellect always waited for the ideal husband, most of them would die unmarried. Clearly the correspondence of these last months breathes a less morbid note than during the previous year or two. We may leave that matter with the remembrance that Charlotte Brontë lived up to the adage, that in marriage it is better to begin with a little aversion, and clearly she had come to love her husband with very genuine devotion. Those who knew him in his later years found that perfectly natural. He impressed me as a peculiarly lovable man.

## Letter 674

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *August 9th*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—I earnestly hope you are by yourself now, and relieved from the fag of entertaining guests. You do not complain, but I am afraid you have had too much of it. E. S. will probably end by accepting L. K., and judging from what you say,

it seems to me that it would be rational to do so. If indeed some one else whom she preferred wished to have her, and had duly and sincerely come forward, matters would be different, but this it appears is not the case, and to cherish any ungrounded and unsanctioned preference is neither right nor wise.

Since I came home, I have not had an unemployed moment; my life is changed indeed, to be wanted continually, to be constantly called for and occupied seems so strange: yet it is a marvellously good thing. As yet I don't quite understand how some wives grow so selfish. As far as my experience of matrimony goes, I think it tends to draw you out of and away from yourself.

We have had sundry callers this week. Yesterday, Mr. Sowden and another gentleman dined here, and Mr. and Mrs. Grant joined them at tea.

I do not think we shall go to Brookroyd soon, on papa's account. I do not wish again to leave home for a time, but I trust you will ere long come here.

I really like Mr. Sowden very well. He asked after you. Mr. Nicholls told him we expected you would be coming to stay with us in the course of three or four weeks, and that he should then invite him over again as he wished us to take sundry rather long walks, and as he should have his wife to look after, and she was trouble enough, it would be quite necessary to have a guardian for the other lady. Mr. Sowden seemed perfectly acquiescent.

Dear Nell,—During the last six weeks the colour of my thoughts is a good deal changed: I know more of the realities of life than I once did. I think many false ideas are propagated, perhaps unintentionally. I think those married women who indiscriminately urge their acquaintance to marry, much to blame. For my part, I can only say with deeper sincerity and fuller significance, what I always said in theory, 'Wait God's will.' Indeed, indeed, Nell, it is a solemn and strange and perilous thing for a woman to become a wife. Man's lot is far, far different. Tell me when you think you can come. Papa is better, but not well. How is your mother? give my love to her, and Ann and Mr. Clapham, and Mercy, if she is good.—Yours faithfully, C. B. NICHOLLS.

Have I told you how much better Mr. Nicholls is? He looks quite strong and hale; he gained 12 lbs. during the four weeks we were in Ireland. To see this improvement in him has been a main source of happiness to me, and to speak truth, a subject of wonder too.

## Letter 675

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *August 29th.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Can you come here on Wednesday week (Sept. 6th)? Try to arrange matters to do so if possible, for it will be better than to delay your visit till the days grow cold and short. I want to see you again, dear Nell, and my husband too will receive you with pleasure, and he is not diffuse of his courtesies or partialities, I can assure you. One friendly word from him means as much as twenty from most people.

We have been busy lately giving a Supper and Tea-drinking to the Singers, Ringers, Sunday-school Teachers, and all the Scholars of the Sunday and National Schools, amounting in all to some 500 souls. It gave satisfaction and went off well.

Papa, I am thankful to say, is much better; he preached last Sunday. How does your mother bear this hot weather? Write soon, dear Nell, and say you will come.—Yours faithfully,

C. B. N.

## Letter 676

TO MISS WOOLER

*September —, 1854.*

MY DEAR MISS WOOLER,—I really seem to have had scarcely a spare moment since that dim, quiet June morning when you, Ellen, and myself all walked down to Haworth Church. Not that I have been wearied or oppressed; but the fact is my time is not my own now; somebody else wants a good portion of it, and says, 'We must do so and so.' We *do* so and so, accordingly; and it generally seems the right thing. . . . We have had many callers from a distance, and latterly some little occupation in the way of preparing for a small village entertainment. Both Mr. Nicholls and myself wished much to make some response for the hearty welcome and general goodwill shown by the parishioners on his return; accordingly the Sunday and day scholars and teachers, the church ringers, singers, etc., to the number of five hundred, were asked to tea and supper in the schoolroom. They seemed to enjoy it much, and it was very pleasant to see their happiness. One of the villagers, in proposing my husband's health, described



him as a '*consistent Christian and a kind gentleman.*' I own the words touched me deeply, and I thought (as I know *you* would have thought had you been present) that to merit and win such a character was better than to earn either wealth, or fame, or power. I am disposed to echo that high but simple eulogium. . . . My dear father was not well when we returned from Ireland. I am, however, most thankful to say that he is better now. May God preserve him to us yet for some years! The wish for his continued life, together with a certain solicitude for his happiness and health, seems, I scarcely know why, even stronger in me now than before I was married. Papa has taken no duty since we returned; and each time I see Mr. Nicholls put on gown or surplice I feel comforted to think that this marriage has secured papa good aid in his old age.

C. BRONTË.

Some letters from Mary Taylor to Ellen Nussey naturally come here. It will be remembered that Miss Nussey had contemplated the post of companion to a Mrs. Upjohn at Gorleston upon conditions which made her consult her two friends. We have seen Charlotte Brontë's letters upon the point. Here is Mary Taylor's sarcastic treatment of the matter.

## Letter 677

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

WELLINGTON, *July 21st, 1853.*

MY DEAR MR. CLERGYMAN AND MRS. CLERGYMAN,—I have received your letter expressing a wish to have my services as companion. Your terms are so indefinite and so low that I had rather have nothing to do with you. As I understand your proposal, you offer me board and lodging, but no clothes or means of getting any. If you intend providing my dress, I should like to know what liberty I should have in the choice and make, and who had worn the things before me, tho' I must say this would not alter my refusal of your offer, as I should still not be so well off as a servant-girl. The pecuniary advantages you offer at some future time I consider worth nothing. They are quite indefinite;

the time when I am to receive them is too far off, and the condition that you make—that you must be dead before I can profit by them—decides me to refuse them altogether.

Your letter is as indefinite about the services you require as about the wages you offer. As to the companionship, affection, etc., I have very little to offer to a stranger, and it strikes me I should never have much for you. Your coarseness of feeling that allows you to pay me the greater part of my wages only after your death, your evident dishonesty in leaving the engagement so indefinite that I might do two women's work for twenty years to come and then have no legal claim on you or your heirs, your evident notion that an expensive dress and diet is to compensate for the absence of money wages, all make me think that your feelings, principles, and pleasures are very different to mine, and there could be no companionship in the case. As to my services, I would not give them without certain money wages paid quarterly, and certain time to be at my own disposal. These are what every servant gets, and I should want something more.

Yours.

*May.*

Dear Ellen,—Here's my opinion on the impudent proposal you mention in your letter, which I received this morning along with one from Amelia. All your news is very interesting, particularly that concerning Amelia, Joe, and Charlotte. My last letters told quite a contrary tale. They were none of them well, and that was proved more by their low spirits than their complaints. I've no doubt Tim is a little pest, as Joe says, but that is no reason why it should not be brought up healthily if possible. I am sorry to hear its intellect is so forward; it ought to look stupid and get fat.

*June 26.*

I have kept my letter back because I had not said all I had to say, and now it's gone out of my head. Since then I have received a letter from you, dated 7th October 1852. It came along with some from Hunsworth of 20th and 23rd February 1853, and one from John, dated 20th October 1852. You mention Mr. Brontë's illness and Charlotte Brontë's liver complaint. I had heard of them both, but not from her. I did not know her liver complaint still continued, and since the date of yours I

hear from Amelia that you and she have been at Hun., and Charlotte Brontë was very well indeed. How are you all now I wonder?

I hear—I mean read—that there is a box full of treasures on the way to me per *Maori*, now at Nelson. All the sailors have run away—very sensible of them when they are probably for £2 a month, and by keeping out of sight till the *Maori* is gone, can hire themselves here for £7. They—I don't mean the sailors—have got some Maoris to land the cargo, but as they can't persuade them to go up aloft, there is no knowing when the ship can come on here.

Well, in the said box is a pair of lace cuffs from you for me to wear 'when I go to a dance.' Do you think I go once a week to a dance? I am very curious to see them, and particularly to know if the fashion of them is still unknown here—in which case they will certainly set me up for a twelvemonth. It is a great mercy and a particular favour of Providence that they were not sent in the *Mahomet Shah*.

I go to a dance now and then. I get an invitation from somebody in the name of some 'party' or parties unknown. We dance at the Hall of the Athenæum, hired and decorated with flags and green stuff for the occasion. We muster about 25 couples, dance with great gravity, and call ourselves *very select*. The thing is managed by some second- and third-rate bachelors who don't know how to give their invites properly in a body, and individually had rather not 'come forward.'

My best amusement is to put on a hood—such as children wear, and very common here for grown people—and go after I've shut up at night, and gossip with a neighbour. I have four or five houses where I do this, and talk more *real talk* in an hour than all the night at a dance.

July 2.

I have just found out it was not you but Amelia that sent me the lace cuffs, and you and Charlotte Brontë concocted the rest of the box. I have no doubt I shall approve of your choice, as Amelia says. Were you all together in the little room at Hunsworth? Giving her your advice? Mind, if the dress is scarlet or pale green, I'll never forgive you.

I folded this letter once without putting my name to.

Don't go and live with Mrs. Clergyman.

M. TAYLOR.

## Letter 678

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

WELLINGTON, *August 10th*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—My conscience has been reproaching me for this last month for neglecting my correspondence. I have done neither that nor anything else except what I could not shirk. Without being positively ill, I have been dull and indifferent to everything but new arrivals or something equally important. I have cured myself, or at least bettered myself for the present, having a 'clean down,' and have just taken out a bundle that ought to have been answered long since.

I am very well content with my dresses and bonnets, and more thankful than you would think to be saved the trouble and responsibility of dressing myself. Neither of the dresses fit—it would be a wonder if they did. They are rather too expensive for my habits, and make rather a contrast to my usual wear. The last bonnet fitted my face to a T, and was altogether a hit, being neither too good nor too flimsy, nor too wintry nor too summery. The one before it (blue satin) I sold; it being only fit for winter, and likely to last me, at the rate I should wear it, about six years.

I thank you for your information in medical matters. It is so difficult a thing for women to get, that it is a particular favour to come by any at a less expense than an illness of one's own. From Amelia's last letter I learn that you had been, or were, ill, and she could not see you, being confined herself to the sofa. I am afraid myself that you have more courage than good fortune, and that your illness has not been so temporary as you hoped in your letter that it would be.

We have lately had a wonder here—viz. a steamer. Not a war steamer, but a merchant vessel. We thought so much of it that the authorities agreed with the owners to hire it for twelve months certain, to ply between the N.Z. ports. Two days ago came another wonder on the top of the first one—another steamer walked in, coming from Sydney *via* Auckland. This one is likely to be a trader between here and Australia. This last one coming in met the other going out, so we had two in sight at once, a thing that has never happened before.

We are in general thriving—that is, commercially, for as to health the place is worse off than usual. I suppose it is time for



the cholera to have come round to us; and though we have not got it, we have some change in the air or climate which makes the place unhealthy. We have scarlatina, influenza, etc. Your last letter has little news, and that not lively. I fear the confinement and dulness of illness will cast down your spirits in spite of your good intentions. I wish this letter could raise them for you. You are certainly better at home when out of health, even when without any definite illness to complain of. It is in this state that one feels the misery of that service that requires you not to do anything, but to be at the beck of another person, and no liberty even to be alone. Ten hours' work at breaking stones is not such a burden as this, if you only have the other fourteen to yourself, with or without the 'comforts of a home.'

Amelia's letter speaks of little but illness—and Tim; she calls Tim of a *forgiving disposition*. It is amusing to think of her not venturing to vex the child for fear it should be angry, and then, when the baby fit of passion was over, breaking out into praise of its *forgiving* disposition! Children don't forgive, they forget. And many full-grown people who get praise for being placable are children in this respect. To forgive requires a mind full grown, which does not always exist in a full-grown body.

MARY TAYLOR.

## Letter 679

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *September 7th*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—I send a French paper to-day. You would almost think I had given them up, it is so long since one was despatched. The fact is they had accumulated to quite a pile during my absence. I wished to look them over before sending them off, and as yet I have scarcely found time. That same Time is an article of which I once had a large stock always on hand; where it is all gone now it would be difficult to say, but my moments are very fully occupied. Take warning, Ellen, the married woman can call but a very small portion of each day her own. Not that I complain of this sort of monopoly as yet, and I hope I never shall incline to regard it as a misfortune, but it certainly exists. We were both disappointed that you could not come on the day I mentioned. I have grudged this splendid weather very much, the moors are in glory, I never saw them fuller

of purple bloom. I wanted you to see them at their best ; they are just turning now, and in another week, I fear, will be faded and sere. As soon as ever you can leave home, be sure to write and let me know.

I am afraid Amelia continues to get on but poorly. At least I had a grievous letter from her a day or two since detailing a visit from Dr. Henriquez, whom it appears she felt herself under the necessity of summoning down from London. I wish her nervous system, or whatever is wrong with her, could get into better order.

Papa continues greatly better ; my husband flourishes, he begins indeed to express some slight alarm at the growing improvement in his condition. I think I am decent, better certainly than I was two months ago ; but people don't compliment me as they do Arthur, excuse the name, it has grown natural to use it now. I trust, dear Nell, that you are all well at Brookroyd, and that your visiting stirs are pretty nearly over. I compassionate you from my heart for all the trouble to which you must be put, and I am rather ashamed of people coming sponging in that fashion one after another ; get away from them and come here.—Yours faithfully,

C. B. NICHOLLS.

How does the romance of real life between E. S. and L. K. get on ?

## Letter 680

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *September 14th*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—Mr. Nicholls and I have a call or two to make in the neighbourhood of Keighley ; we wish so to arrange as to meet you there and bring you back with us in the cab. On Wednesday Mr. Nicholls is always engaged, as it is a lecture day, but on Thursday next (the 21st) we will D.V. expect you at the station by the 6.11 train. We shall be very, very glad to see you, dear Nell, and I want the day to come.

E. S. does not seem to me one of the wise virgins, and I must candidly add that L. K. strikes me also as one of the slightly infatuated ; it must be outside which chiefly attracts him, and then her reluctance stimulates his pursuit. However, I trust we shall have plenty of time to talk them and others over ere long. Good-bye, dear Nell.—Yours very faithfully,

C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 681

TO MRS. GASKELL

*September 19th.*

Yes! I am thankful to say my husband is in improved health and spirits. It makes me content and grateful to hear him from time to time avow his happiness in the brief, plain phrase of sincerity. My own life is more occupied than it used to be: I have not so much time for thinking: I am obliged to be more practical, for my dear Arthur is a very practical as well as a very punctual and methodical man. Every morning he is in the National School by nine o'clock; he gives the children religious instruction till half-past ten. Almost every afternoon he pays visits amongst the poor parishioners. Of course he often finds a little work for his wife to do, and I hope she is not sorry to help him. I believe it is not bad for me that his bent should be so wholly towards matters of life and active usefulness, so little inclined to the literary and contemplative. As to his continued affection and kind attentions, it does not become me to say much of them; but they neither change nor diminish.

C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 682

TO MRS. GASKELL

*September 21st, 1854.*

. . . I say nothing about the war, but when I read of its horrors I cannot help thinking that it is one of the greatest curses that ever fell upon mankind. I trust it may not last long, for it really seems to me that no glory to be gained can compensate for the sufferings which must be endured. This may seem a little ignoble and unpatriotic; but I think that as we advance towards middle age nobleness and patriotism have a different signification to us to that which we accept while young.

You inquire kindly about papa. He is better, and seems to gain strength as the weather gets colder; indeed of late years his health has always been better in winter than in summer. We are all indeed pretty well, and for my own part, it is long since I have known such comparative immunity from headache, etc., as during the last three months. My life is different from what it used to be. May God make me thankful for it! I have a good, kind, attached husband, and every day my own attachment to him grows stronger.

C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 683

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *October 11th, '54.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I cannot say I was surprised when I received yours to learn that you had had to wait at Keighley Station two long hours without fire or company, but I was truly vexed and concerned. On looking at the clock after you were gone, I feared how it would be, so did Arthur, and we were both exceedingly grieved that you had not stayed for the later train. I must say Mr. E.'s behaviour was very creditable to him, the man must have the germ of innate politeness in his nature. I return his courteous little note.

You will ask how we got on with the party yesterday. Read the enclosed which I received on Monday morning, and it will tell you. Amelia is really a simpleton in some things, she will now be worshipping Mrs. —, fine clothes, open pink muslin gown, worked petticoat, velvet cape, and carriage and pairs included. I do not say that she should show or feel one shade of jealousy of her husband's former flames, but that assiduous cultivation of their society and countenance seems strained, odd, unnatural. Arthur is very strong upon it and much out of patience with Amelia.

I don't know whether I shall be able to keep him at home now whenever she does come. He threatens to bolt. He flourishes, and desires his kind regards to you. He also often says he wishes you were well settled in life. He is just gone out this morning in a rather refractory mood about some Dissenters. On Sunday, we had a pair of very sweet sermons indeed, really good, and touching the better springs of our nature. Just before going to Church he menaced me with something worse than the preceding Sunday. I was agreeably disappointed.

I cannot say I wonder at Mr. Heald's resignation. It seems to me that all who truly believe the doctrines and trust the promises of Christianity must, after watching the sufferings of sickness and agonies of death in one they love, feel, in the first instance, a sort of peace in their release, and resignation to their loss. It is some time afterwards that the dark and durable regrets arise, and perhaps, surrounded by his family and parishioners, he may be spared these.



With love to your dear mother, and all at Brookroyd, most to yourself, Nell,—I am, yours faithfully, C. B. NICHOLLS.

Papa, I am sorry to say, is still a good deal troubled with his cough, though better than he has been.

## Letter 684

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*October —, '54. Friday Morning.*

DEAR NELL,—You would have been written to before now if I had not been very busy. Joe Taylor and the child came on Tuesday morning. Amelia only stayed till the same evening, we had the others till yesterday. We got on with them better than I expected. Amelia seemed pleased and content and forgot her fancies for the time; she looked not at all pretty but stronger and in better health. Tim behaved capitally on the whole. She amused papa very much, chatting away to him very funnily, his white hair took her fancy, she announced a decided preference for it over Arthur's black hair, and coolly advised the latter to 'go to the barber and get his whiskers cut off.' Papa says she speaks as I did when I was a child, says the same odd unexpected things. Neither Arthur nor papa liked Amelia's looks at first, but she improved on them, I think.

Arthur will go to the Consecration of Heptonstall Church, D.V., but I don't mean to accompany him. I hardly like coming in contact with all the Mrs. Parsons; if you were here I should go.

Arthur heard from Mr. Sowden lately—an uninteresting letter, no remark on our vote of thanks, etc. A brother of his is coming over. Arthur means to invite them both here for a night. I shall take stock of them and tell you what I think.

Arthur is impatient for his walk. I am obliged to scrawl hurriedly. When I go to Brookroyd, if I hear Mr. Clapham or anybody else say anything to the disparagement of single women, I shall go off like a bomb shell, and as for you,—but I won't prophesy.

Arthur has just been glancing over this note. He thinks I have written too freely about Amelia. Men don't seem to understand making letters a vehicle of communication, they always

seem to think us incautious. I'm sure I don't think I have said anything rash; however, you must burn it when read. Arthur says such letters as mine never ought to be kept, they are dangerous as lucifer matches, so be sure to follow a recommendation he has just given, 'fire them' or 'there will be no more,' such is his resolve. I can't help laughing, this seems to me so funny. Arthur, however, says he is quite 'serious' and looks it, I assure you; he is bending over the desk with his eyes full of concern. I am now desired 'to have done with it,' so with his kind regards and mine, good-bye, dear Ellen.—Yours affectionately,

C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 685

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *October 31st*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—I wrote my last in a hurry, and as soon as I had sealed it, remembered that it contained no comment on what you had said about Elizabeth's illness. I was sorry, for the news had impressed me painfully, and I wished much to know how she was getting on. Does the slight improvement continue? Her particular wish for champagne might imply a turn either for the better or the worse. I trust it was the former in her case, though I have known where such a caprice of the appetite has been of fatal augury. You will kindly remember to give me information respecting her when you write again.

The Consecration of Heptonstall Church took place last Thursday; Arthur fully intended to go, but a funeral kept him at home. I regretted this as the day happened to be very fine. Mr. Grant went. He said there was a good attendance of the laity, but very few clergy, this was owing to the fact of invitations not having been sent.

I return Mrs. —'s letter; it bears that character of unassuming goodness and sense which mark all her letters, but I should fear her illness has perhaps been more serious than she allows. She is evidently not one to make much of her own ailments.

Dear Ellen, Arthur complains that you do not distinctly promise to burn my letters as you receive them. He says you must give him a plain pledge to that effect, or he will read every line I write and elect himself censor of our correspondence.

He says women are most rash in letter-writing, they think only of the trustworthiness of their immediate friend, and do not look to contingencies; a letter may fall into any hand. You must give the promise, I believe, at least he says so, with his best regards, or else you will get such notes as he writes to Mr. Sowden, plain, brief statements of facts without the adornment of a single flourish, with no comment on the character or peculiarities of any human being, and if a phrase of sensibility or affection steals in, it seems to come on tiptoe, looking ashamed of itself, blushing 'pea-green' as he says, and holding both its shy hands before its face. Write him out his promise on a separate slip of paper, in a legible hand, and send it in your next. Papa, I am glad to say, continues pretty well. I hope your mother prospers, and that Ann is better, with love to all, Mr. Clapham included.—I am, yours faithfully,

C. B. NICHOLLS.<sup>1</sup>

## Letter 686

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *November 7th, 1854.*

DEAR ELLEN,—The news of an acquaintance's death always seems to come suddenly. I thought ill of the previous accounts you had given of poor Elizabeth —, but still I did not expect she would die so soon. And theirs is a family into which it is difficult to realise the entrance of death. They seemed so cheerful, active, sanguine. How does S. bear her loss? Will she not feel companionless, almost sisterless? I should almost fear so, for a married sister can hardly be to her like the other. I should like to know too how Mrs. Hewitt is. Did she ever lose a child before?

Arthur wishes you would burn my letters. He was out when I commenced this letter, but he is just come in. On my asking whether he would give the pledge required in return, he says, 'Yes, we may now write any dangerous stuff we please to each other'; it is not 'old friends' he mistrusts, but the chances of war, the accidental passing of letters into hands and under eyes for which they were never written.

All this seems mighty amusing to me: it is a man's mode of viewing correspondence. Men's letters are proverbially uninter-

<sup>1</sup> Upon this letter Miss Nussey had written a note to the effect that Mr. Nicholls and Mr. Brontë were the very first to break his (Mr. Nicholls's) objections—by requesting the use of Charlotte Brontë's Letters for Mrs. Gaskell.

esting and uncommunicative. I never quite knew before why they made them so. They may be right in a sense. Strange chances do fall out certainly. As to my own notes, I never thought of attaching importance to them or considering their fate, till Arthur seemed to reflect on both so seriously.

Mr. Sowden and his brother were here yesterday, stayed all night, and are but just gone. George Sowden is six or seven years the junior of Sutcliffe Sowden (the one you have seen); he looks very delicate and quiet, a good sincere man, I should think. Mr. Sowden asked after Miss Nussey.

I will write again next week if all be well, to name a day for coming to see you. I am sure you want, or at least ought to have, a little rest before you are bothered with more company: but whenever I come, I suppose, dear Nell, under present circumstances, it will be a quiet visit, and that I shall not need to bring more than a plain dress or two. Tell me this when you write.—  
Believe me, faithfully yours,

C. B. NICHOLLS.

I intend to write to Miss Wooler shortly.

## Letter 687

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *November 14th*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—I am only just at liberty to write to you: guests have kept me very busy during the last two or three days. Sir J. Kay-Shuttleworth and a friend of his came here on Saturday afternoon and stayed till after dinner on Monday. His chief errand was to see my husband, and when he had seen him he took a fancy to him, and before his departure made him a formal offer of the living of Padiham (near his house at Gawthorpe), now vacant, or on the point of becoming so. Arthur of course is tied to Haworth so long as papa lives, and was obliged to decline for that reason, had there been none other. Arthur suggested Mr. Sowden. Mr. Sowden's present income is only £130; £80 fixed, the rest quite uncertain. There is a beautiful Church at Padiham, and a Parsonage is about to be erected.

When I go to Brookroyd, Arthur will take me there and stay one night, but I cannot yet fix the time of my visit. Joe and Amelia, it seems, are off to Scarbro', they mean to stay a fortnight, and Amelia has written in great anxiety that I should wait till



they come home. Indeed, I have so long promised to visit them when I go to Brookroyd that it would not be right to fall off. You are aware of the inconvenience and expense of making Huns-  
worth the subject of a second visit direct from Haworth. I am sorry too to be obliged to defer seeing you, very sorry, but I hope to manage the matter before Christmas. Good-bye for the present, dear Nell.—Yours faithfully, C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 688

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *November 21st*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—I hope you will write very soon and let me know how Mercy is getting on, and how you all are. I trust the fever will soon be allayed in Mercy's case, and, above all, that it will be confined to her, and not spread to others of the family, and, indeed I quite hope this will not be the case, because the fever was not generated at Brookroyd, proving miasma in the neighbourhood, but was imported it seems from Leeds. Mrs. ——— was indeed thoughtless. I fear you will have much to do, too much; but yet I hope and believe you will be supported.

You ask about Mr. Sowden's matter. He walked over here on a wild rainy day. We talked it over. He is quite disposed to entertain the proposal, but of course there must be close inquiry and ripe consideration before either he or the patron decide. Meantime, Mr. Sowden is most anxious that the affairs should be kept absolutely quiet; in the event of disappointment it would be both painful and injurious to him if it should be rumoured at Hebden Bridge that he has had thoughts of leaving. Arthur says if a whisper gets out, these things fly from parson to parson like wild-fire. I cannot help somehow wishing that the matter should be arranged, if all on examination is found tolerably satisfactory.

Papa continues pretty well, I am thankful to say; his deafness is wonderfully relieved. Winter seems to suit him better than summer, besides he is settled and content, as I perceive with gratitude to God.

Dear Ellen, I wish you well through every trouble. Arthur is not in just now or he would send a kind message. With love to Mercy and all at Brookroyd, and in the hope that you will, as soon as possible, let me know how she is doing.—Believe me, yours faithfully, C. B. NICHOLLS.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

## LAST DAYS

THE few letters of the next few weeks tell their own story. Charlotte Brontë died on March 31, 1855.

## Letter 689

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *November 29th*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—I intended to have written a line yesterday, but just as I was sitting down for the purpose, Arthur called to me to take a walk. We set off not intending to go far, but though wild and cloudy, it was fair in the morning. When we had got about half a mile on the moors, Arthur suggested the idea of the water-fall; after the melted snow, he said, it would be fine. I had often wanted to see it in its winter power, so we walked on. It was fine indeed, a perfect torrent raving over the rocks white and bountiful. It began to rain while we were watching it, and we returned home under a streaming sky; however, I enjoyed the walk inexpressibly, and would not have missed the spectacle on any account.

How is Mercy now? I hope still better. I hope she will get forward with her convalescence in clever style, and not linger half-fondly over the business. How are you? Can you get out now and take a walk sometimes? Let me know soon, dear Ellen, about your welfare and hers.

Arthur somewhat demurs about my going to Brookroyd as yet: fever, you know, is a formidable word. I cannot say I entertain any apprehensions myself further than this, that I should be terribly bothered at the idea of being taken ill from home and causing trouble, and strangers are sometimes more liable to infection than persons living in the house.

Mr. Sowden has seen Sir J. K. Shuttleworth, but I fancy the

matter is very uncertain as yet. It seems the Bishop of Manchester stipulates that the clergyman chosen should, if possible, be from his own Diocese, and this, Arthur says, is quite right and just. An exception would have been made in Arthur's favour, but the case is not so clear with Mr. Sowden. However, no harm will have been done if the matter does not take wind, as I trust it will not. Write very soon, dear Nell, and believe me, yours faithfully,

C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 690

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *December 7th*, 1854.

DEAR ELLEN,—I shall not get leave to go to Brookroyd before Christmas now, so do not expect me. For my own part I really should have no fear, and if it just depended on me, I should come; but these matters are not quite in my power now, another must be consulted, and where his wish and judgment have a decided bias to a particular course, I make no stir, but just adopt it. Arthur is sorry to disappoint both you and me, but it is his fixed wish that a few weeks should be allowed yet to elapse before we meet. Probably he is confirmed in this desire by my having a cold at present. I did not achieve the walk to the waterfall with impunity, though I changed my wet things immediately on returning home, yet I felt a chill afterwards, and the same night had sore throat and cold; however, I am better now, but not quite well.

I am truly glad to hear that Mercy is recovering so nicely. I trust for your sake as well as hers there will be no drawback, and that you will soon have some complete rest, which you must need.

It is good news about Mrs. Hewitt. The affair seems to have got over admirably. Was it not a little sooner than she expected?

Did I tell you that our poor little Flossy is dead? He drooped for a single day, and died quietly in the night without pain. The loss even of a dog was very saddening, yet perhaps no dog ever had a happier life or an easier death.

Papa continues pretty well, I am happy to say, and my dear boy flourishes; I do not mean that he continues to grow stouter, which one would not desire, but he keeps in excellent condition.

You would wonder I dare say at the long disappearance of the French paper. I had got such an accumulation of them unread that I thought I would not wait to send the old ones. Now you

will receive them regularly. I am writing in haste. It is almost inexplicable to me that I seem so often hurried now, but the fact is, whenever Arthur is in, I must have occupations in which he can share, or which will not at least divert my attention from him; thus a multitude of little matters get put off till he goes out, and then I am quite busy. Good-bye, dear Ellen, I hope we shall meet soon.  
—Yours faithfully, C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 691

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *December 26th, '54.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I return Mrs. Hewitt's letter. It is as you say, very genuine, truthful, affectionate, maternal, without a taint of sham or exaggeration. Mary will love her child without spoiling it, I think. She does not make an uproar about her happiness either: the longer I live, the more I suspect exaggerations. I fancy it is sometimes a sort of fashion for each to vie with the other in protestations about their wonderful felicity, and sometimes they—FIB. I am truly glad to hear you are all better at Brookroyd. In the course of three or four weeks more, I expect to get leave to come to you. I certainly long to see you again; one circumstance reconciles me to this delay, the weather. I do not know whether it has been as bad with you as with us, but here for three weeks we have had little else than a succession of hurricanes.

In your last, you asked about Mr. Sowden and Sir James. I fear Mr. Sowden has little chance of the living; he had heard nothing more of it the last time he wrote to Arthur, and in a note he had from Sir James, yesterday, the subject is not mentioned.

You inquire too after Mrs. Gaskell. She has not been here, and I think I should not like her to come now till summer. She is very busy with her story of *North and South*.

I must make this note short that it may not be overweight. Arthur joins me in sincere good wishes for a happy Christmas, a many of them to you and yours. He is well, thank God, and so am I, and he is 'my dear boy' certainly, dearer now than he was six months ago. In three days we shall actually have been married that length of time! Good-bye, dear Nell.—Yours faithfully, C. B. NICHOLLS.



## Letter 692

TO MRS. CLAPHAM

HAWORTH, *December 28th, 1854.*

MY DEAR MRS. CLAPHAM,—Ellen will have already received a note from me which partly answers your kind note of yesterday. I hope to visit Brookroyd about the beginning of February, but before that time, I do not think it likely I shall get off. Do not therefore postpone any engagements that may offer for yourself on my account. As to infection, I have not the slightest fear on my own account, but there are cases, as I need not remind you, where wives have just to put their own judgment on the shelf and do as they are bid.

I am truly glad to hear through you that Ellen has borne her late fatigues pretty well, for I know that much anxiety or over-exertion does not suit her, and she must have had a good deal of both lately.

It would be cheering to see your mother and Mercy both down on Christmas Day. Give my love to Mercy. I hope she will be a very good girl, eat nourishing things and get strong as fast as she can. You do not mention your own health, but I trust you are now quite recovered from your late painful attack.

Tell Mr. Clapham I have long been wanting to pay my bride-visit to Brookroyd and that I shall be sincerely glad to shake hands with him once more. I want to introduce him to my husband too, and I have an idea that they would not disagree, that is, if they had time to know each other, which, however, could scarcely be done in a day.

With love to your mother, Ellen, Mercy, and yourself.—Believe me, my dear Mrs. Clapham, affectionately yours,

C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 693

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *January 19th, 1855.*

DEAR ELLEN,—Since our return from Gawthorpe, we have had a Mr. Bell, one of Arthur's cousins, staying with us. It was a great pleasure; I wish you could have seen him and made his acquaintance: a true gentleman by nature and cultivation is not after all an everyday thing.

As to the living of Habergham or Padiham, it appears the chance is doubtful at present for anybody. The present incumbent wishes to retract his resignation, and declares his intention of appointing a curate for two years. I fear Mr. Sowden hardly produced a favourable impression. A strong wish was again expressed that Arthur could come, but that is out of the question.

I very much wish to come to Brookroyd, and I hope to be able to write with certainty and fix Wednesday the 31st January as the day: but the fact is, I am not sure whether I shall be well enough to leave home. At present I should be a most tedious visitor. My health has been really very good ever since my return from Ireland till about ten days ago, when the stomach seemed quite suddenly to lose its tone, indigestion and continual faint sickness have been my portion ever since. Don't conjecture, dear Nell, for it is too soon yet, though I certainly never before felt as I have done lately. I am rather mortified to lose my good looks and grow thin as I am doing, just when I thought of going to Brookroyd. Poor Joe Taylor! I still hope he will get better, but Amelia writes grievous, though not always clear or consistent accounts. Dear Ellen, I want to see you, and I hope I shall see you well. My love to all.—Yours faithfully,

C. B. NICHOLLS.

Thank Mr. Clapham for his hospitable wish, but it would be quite out of Arthur's power to stay more than one night or two at the most.

Early in the new year, as stated in the above letter, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholls spent three days with Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth at Gawthorpe. Mrs. Gaskell informs us that:—

'Soon after her return she was attacked by new sensations of perpetual nausea and ever-recurring faintness. After this state of things had lasted for some time she yielded to Mr. Nicholls's wish that a doctor should be sent for. He came, and assigned a natural cause for her miserable indisposition—a little patience and all would go right. She, who was ever patient in illness, tried hard to bear up and bear on. But the dreadful sickness increased and increased, till the very sight of food occasioned nausea. "A wren would have starved on what she ate during those last six weeks," says one. Tabby's health had suddenly and utterly given way, and she died in this time of distress and anxiety respecting

the last daughter of the house she had served so long. Martha tenderly waited on her mistress, and from time to time tried to cheer her with the thought of the baby that was coming. "I dare say I shall be glad some day," she would say; "but I am so ill—so weary——" Then she took to her bed, too weak to sit up.'

## Letter 694

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *January 23rd, 1855.*

DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—As Charlotte is not well, she requests me to answer your letter, and say that it will not be possible for her to visit you earlier than the 31st. I should say that unless she improves very rapidly, it will not be advisable for her to leave home even then.

She will be obliged to you to keep 2 lbs. of honey for her. She does not know of a customer for the *Queens of Scotland*. The remainder of your note she will answer, I hope, soon.—  
Believe me, sincerely yours, A. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 695

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, KEIGHLEY, *January 29th, 1855.*

DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—As Charlotte continues unwell, I again write a line for her. She has been confined to bed for some days. I have sent for Dr. MacTurk<sup>1</sup> to-day, as I wish to have better advice than Haworth affords. Under these circumstances you will see that it is quite impossible to name any date for our visit to you.

Charlotte sends her love, and says she will write as soon as she is able.—Believe me, faithfully yours, A. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 696

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *February 1st, 1855.*

DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—Dr. MacTurk saw Charlotte on Tuesday. His opinion was that her illness would be of some duration, but

<sup>1</sup> Dr. MacTurk was the most able physician in Bradford at this period.

that there was no immediate danger. I trust, therefore, that in a few weeks she will be well again.

We were very much concerned to hear of your mother's continued illness, both on your account and hers. Charlotte begs you will write a line soon to let her know how Mrs. Nussey gets on, and she is sure she can trust you to excuse her from answering until she is able.—Believe me, yours faithfully,

A. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 697

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *February 14th, 1855.*

DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—It is difficult to write to friends about my wife's illness as its cause is yet uncertain; at present she is completely prostrated with weakness and sickness and frequent fever. All may turn out well in the end, and I hope it will; if you saw her you would perceive that she can maintain no correspondence at present.

She thinks of you and sympathises with you in your present affliction, and longed much to hear from you.—Believe me, sincerely yours,

A. B. NICHOLLS.

*P.S.*—Till lately Mr. Brontë was very well; he is now, however, suffering from bronchial irritation.

There are but three more letters, all written in faint pencil, from the bed of sickness:—

## Letter 698

TO LÆTITIA WHEELWRIGHT

*February 15th, 1855.*

A few lines of acknowledgment your letter *shall* have, whether well or ill. At present I am confined to my bed with illness, and have been so for three weeks. Up to this period, since my marriage, I have had excellent health. My husband and I live at home with my father; of course I could not leave *him*. He is pretty well, better than last summer. No kinder, better husband than mine, it seems to me, there can be in the world. I do not want now for kind companionship in health and the tenderest



nursing in sickness. Deeply I sympathise in all you tell me about Dr. Wheelwright and your excellent mother's anxiety. I trust he will not risk another operation. I cannot write more now ; for I am much reduced and very weak. God bless you all !  
—Yours affectionately, C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 699

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I must write one line out of my weary bed. The news of Mary's probable recovery came like a ray of joy to me. I am not going to talk about my sufferings, it would be useless and painful—I want to give you an assurance which I know will comfort you—and that is that I find in my husband the tenderest nurse, the kindest support—the best earthly comfort that ever woman had. His patience never fails, and it is tried by sad days and broken nights. Write and tell me about Mrs. Hewitt's case, how long she was ill and in what way. Papa, thank God! is better. Our poor old Tabby is *dead* and *buried*. Give my truest love to Miss Wooler. May God comfort and help you.  
C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 700

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

MY DEAR ELLEN,—Thank you very much for Mrs. Hewitt's sensible clear letter. Thank her too. In much, her case was wonderfully like mine—but I am reduced to greater weakness—the skeleton emaciation is the same, etc., etc., etc. I cannot talk—even to my dear, patient, constant Arthur, I can say but few words at once.

These last two days I have been somewhat better and have taken some beef-tea—spoonsful of wine and water—a mouthful of light pudding at different times.

Dear Ellen, I realise full well what you have gone through, and will have to go through—O may you continue to be supported and not sink! Sickness here has been terribly rife. Papa is well now. Kindest regards to Mr. and Mrs. Clapham, your mother, Mercy.

Write when you can.—Yours,

C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 701

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, KEIGHLEY,  
*March 13th, 1855.*

MY DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—Be assured you have all our sympathies in the awful and painful event which has just befallen your household. I broke the sad news to Charlotte as gently as I could, but it was a great shock. She is much concerned both on your account and that of poor Mrs. Clapham, and also at the thought that she shall never see again one whom she greatly respected. These seem troubled times, my dear Miss Nussey. May God support you through them.

Charlotte was better last week—this week I am sorry to say she has again suffered much. The bad weather has thrown her back.

You do not mention Miss Mercy, but we should be glad to know how she is getting on when you can write again.—Believe me, yours very sincerely,

A. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 702

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH, *March 31st, 1855.*

DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—Mr. Brontë's letter would prepare you for the sad intelligence I have to communicate. Our dear Charlotte is no more. She died last night of exhaustion. For the last two or three weeks we had become very uneasy about her, but it was not until Sunday evening that it became apparent that her sojourn with us was likely to be short. We intend to bury her on Wednesday morning.—Believe me, sincerely yours,

A. B. NICHOLLS.

Mrs. Gaskell is our only other authority for the last sad days :—

Long days and longer nights went by ; still the same relentless nausea and faintness, and still borne on in patient trust.

Mrs. Gaskell's Narrative. About the third week in March there was a change ; a low, wandering delirium came on ; and in it she begged constantly for food and even for stimulants. She swallowed

eagerly now ; but it was too late. Wakening for an instant from this stupor of intelligence she saw her husband's woe-worn face, and caught the sound of some murmured words of prayer that God would spare her. 'Oh!' she whispered forth, 'I am not going to die, am I? He will not separate us, we have been so happy.'

Early on Saturday morning, March 31st, the solemn tolling of Haworth church bell spoke forth the fact of her death to the villagers who had known her from a child, and whose hearts shivered within them as they thought of the two sitting desolate and alone in the old grey house.

## Letter 703

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

HAWORTH PARSONAGE,  
*April 11th, 1855.*

MY DEAR MADAM,—Mr. Brontë and myself thank you very sincerely for your sympathy with us in our sad bereavement. Our loss is indeed great—the loss of one as good as she was gifted. Although she had been ill from the beginning of January, it was only a few days previous to her death that we became alarmed for her safety. On the whole she had not much suffering—she spoke little during the last few days, but continued quite conscious.

Mr. Brontë is pretty well, tho' of course the present trial is a great shock to him.

I return your letter as I do not know her address.<sup>1</sup> Again thanking you for your sympathy, I am, my dear madam, yours faithfully,  
A. B. NICHOLLS.

<sup>1</sup> The address of Miss Lætitia Wheelwright.

## CHAPTER XXXV

## THE AFTERMATH

THERE still remain some interesting documents to add to the Brontë story. By her will,<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Nicholls left her husband the very small property that she had derived from her novels. Mr. Nicholls stayed on at Haworth for the six years that followed his wife's death. When Mr. Brontë died he returned to Ireland—to Banagher in King's County. Some years later he married again—a cousin, Miss Bell by name. That second marriage was one of unmixed blessedness. I found him forty years later in a home of supreme simplicity and charm, esteemed

<sup>1</sup> The will runs as follows :—

Extracted from the District Probate Registry at York attached to Her Majesty's High Court of Justice.

*In the name of God. Amen. I, CHARLOTTE NICHOLLS, of Haworth, in the parish of Bradford and county of York, being of sound and disposing mind, memory, and understanding, but mindful of my own mortality, do this seventeenth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five, make this my last Will and Testament in manner and form following, that is to say: In case I die without issue I give and bequeath to my husband all my property to be his absolutely and entirely, but, In case I leave issue I bequeath to my husband the interest of my property during his lifetime, and at his death I desire that the principal should go to my surviving child or children; should there be more than one child, share and share alike. And I do hereby make and appoint my said husband, Arthur Bell Nicholls, clerk, sole executor of this my last Will and Testament; In witness whereof I have to this my last Will and Testament subscribed my hand, the day and year first above written—CHARLOTTE NICHOLLS. Signed and acknowledged by the said testatrix CHARLOTTE NICHOLLS, as and for her last Will and Testament in the presence of us, who, at her request, in her presence and in presence of each other, have at the same time hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses thereto: Patrick Brontë, B.A., Incumbent of Haworth, Yorkshire; Martha Brown.*

*The eighteenth day of April 1855, the Will of CHARLOTTE NICHOLLS, late of Haworth, in the parish of Bradford in the county of York (wife of the Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls, Clerk in Holy Orders) (having bona notabilia within the province of York) Deceased was proved in the prerogative court of York by the oath of the said Arthur Bell Nicholls (the husband), the sole executor to whom administration was granted, he having been first sworn duly to administer.*

Testatrix died 31st March 1855.



by all who knew him and idolised in his own household. It was not difficult to understand that Charlotte Brontë had loved him and had fought down parental opposition in his behalf. The qualities of gentleness, sincerity, unaffected piety, and delicacy of mind were his. He lived for years as a country farmer, attending the neighbouring markets and looking after his stock. He wrote once or twice to English newspapers when questions arose concerning his wife's fame—otherwise he broke no silence.

Martha Brown went to stay with him and his wife for a time, but the only visitors from England who were Brontë enthusiasts whom he consented to receive other than the editor of these letters were Mr. Reginald Smith of the firm of Smith, Elder, and Mr. Field of the Brontë Society. He read every word written about the Brontës with keenest interest, and his house was full of mementos. There were drawings on the walls by the three sisters, and books in the cases that they had handled. Assuredly the Brontë tradition was well maintained in that quiet little Irish town.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Brontë died on June 7, 1861, and his funeral in Haworth Church is described in the *Bradford Review* of the following week :—

Great numbers of people had collected in the churchyard, and a few minutes before noon the corpse was brought out through the eastern gate of the garden leading into the churchyard. The Rev. Dr. Burnet, Vicar of Bradford, read the funeral service, and led the way into the church, and the following clergymen were the bearers of the coffin: The Rev. Dr. Cartman of Skipton; Rev. Mr. Sowden of Hebden Bridge; the Incumbents of Cullingworth, Oakworth, Morton, Oxenhope, and St. John's Ingrow. The chief mourners were the Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls, son-in-law of the deceased; Martha Brown, the housekeeper; and her sister; Mrs. Brown, and Mrs. Wainwright. There were several gentlemen followed the corpse whom we did not know. All the shops in Haworth were closed, and the people filled every pew, and the

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Bell Nicholls died on Monday, December 3, 1906, aged 90, and was buried in the new churchyard of Banagher.

aisles in the church, and many shed tears during the impressive reading of the service for the burial of the dead, by the vicar. The body of Mr. Brontë was laid within the altar rails, by the side of his daughter Charlotte. He is the last that can be interred inside of Haworth Church. On the coffin was this inscription: 'Patrick Brontë, died June 7th, 1861, aged 84 years.'

His will, which was proved at Wakefield,<sup>1</sup> left the bulk of his property, as was natural, to the son-in-law who had faithfully served and tended him for the six years which succeeded Charlotte Brontë's death.

There are also other documents concerning the authorised biography, as, for example, the following from Mary Taylor :—

## Letter 704

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

WELLINGTON, *April 19th, '56.*

DEAR ELLEN,—I got your letter a week ago, that is 5 months after it was written. It has been the same with those from John and from Amelia. It is quite old-fashioned to be so long without news from England! There were 3 mails due at once. Your letter is most interesting concerning poor Charlotte's *Life*. If, for the sake of those who behaved ill to her, the truth cannot be

<sup>1</sup> Extracted from the Principal Registry of the Probate Divorce and Admiralty Division of the High Court of Justice.

*Being of sound mind and judgment, in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I, PATRICK BRONTË, B.A., Incumbent of Haworth, in the Parish of Bradford and county of York, make this my last Will and Testament: I leave forty pounds to be equally divided amongst all my brothers and sisters to whom I gave considerable sums in times past; And I direct the same sum of forty pounds to be sent for distribution to Mr. Hugh Brontë, Ballinasceagh, near Loughbrickland, Ireland; I leave thirty pounds to my servant, Martha Brown, as a token of regard for long and faithful services to me and my children; To my beloved and esteemed son-in-law, the Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls, B.A., I leave and bequeath the residue of my personal estate of every description which I shall be possessed of at my death for his own absolute benefit; And I make him my sole executor; And I revoke all former and other Wills, in witness whereof I, the said PATRICK BRONTË, have to this my last Will, contained in this sheet of paper, set my hand this twentieth day of June, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five.*

PATRICK BRONTË.—Signed and acknowledged by the said PATRICK BRONTË as his Will in the presence of us present at the same time, and who in his presence and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses: JOSEPH REDMAN, ELIZA BROWN.

spoken, still people should not tell lies. The fact reached me even here that Mr. Brontë did not choose his daughter should marry—she wrote to me that she once dismissed Mr. Nicholls because he (her papa) was so angry that she was frightened—frightened for *him*. It was long after, years I think, that she told him that she had determined to see Mr. Nicholls again, and without positively saying yes, to retract her refusal. I can never think without gloomy anger of Charlotte's sacrifices to the selfish old man. How well we know that, had she left him entirely and succeeded in gaining wealth, and name, and influence, she would have had all the world lauding her to the skies for any trivial act of generosity that would have cost her nothing! But how on earth is all this to be set straight! Mrs Gaskell seems far too able a woman to put her head into such a wasp nest, as she would raise about her by speaking the truth of living people. How she will get through with it I can't imagine. Charlotte once wrote to me that Miss Martineau had no bump of secretiveness at all, and that she (Charlotte) had dropped her acquaintance on that account. I am very curious about Miss Martineau's life. What do you mean about her having written it—is it published? Otherwise how do you know what she has said of Charlotte?

Your account of Joe and Amelia agrees with the impression Amelia's letters give me. She writes late at night and seems to have spent her time nursing until every other idea has gone out of her head. She gives no news, mentions no friends, and seems to know nothing but how unhappy she is. This want of power to turn her thoughts abroad shows more depression than she herself is aware of. But what remedy? No one can take her place, even if they had the authority to send her away. Her very mind gets warped by the constant strain on it. I begin now to incline to John's opinion that Joe's hopelessness is a symptom of his disorder and not to be believed in. John seems to think he will get better by slow degrees.

We have been in danger of a terrible misfortune here. A fire broke out in a lot of warehouses at 2 o'clock in the morning a week ago (3rd May) and was not subdued till five. It was so calm (a most unusual thing) that the smoke and flame rose perpendicularly. If there had been any wind at all, all our end of the town must have been burnt. We roof our houses with thin pieces of wood put on like slates, and a slight breeze would have set a dozen roofs on fire at once. Waring's place is about

200 yds. off, mine 300 yds. more ; but there are wooden buildings all the way, and I should only have had the favour of being burnt last. In three hours the fire destroyed the value of £15,000, and then we were much indebted to a brick wall, the only one about the whole clump of buildings, that delayed the fire a little and gave the engines power over it. Twelve years ago there was a fire and a raging wind, and buildings as distant as mine were set on fire by the sparks and embers. Nearly the whole town was burnt. *Du reste*, I am plodding on as usual. I have good health and pleasant times, though no great pleasures ; yet little unhappiness except the recollection that I am getting old and shall soon be solitary, for my friends are slipping away. I cannot say I make no new ones, but somehow I don't believe in them. I suppose I get selfish and suspicious. I suppose you know that in the last 18 months I have not prospered in wealth, being just where I was in that respect a year and a half ago. I have no right to call this a misfortune, but having been improving several years before made me unreasonable. I do not work hard enough to justify me in expectations of getting rich. Just now I have more to do and probably shall have. I wish I could set the world right on many points, but above all respecting Charlotte. It would do said world good to know her and be forced to revere her in spite of their contempt for poverty and helplessness. No one ever gave up more than she did and with full consciousness of what she sacrificed. I don't think myself that women are justified in sacrificing themselves for others, but since the world generally expects it of them, they should at least acknowledge it. But where much is given we are all wonderfully given to grasp at more. If Charlotte had left home and made a favour of returning, she would have got thanks instead of tyranny—wherefore take care of yourself, Ellen, and if you choose to give a small modicum of mention of other people, *grumble hard*.—Yours affectionately,

MARY TAYLOR.

## Letter 705

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

PLYMOUTH GROVE,  
MANCHESTER, *July 9th*, '56.

MY DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—You must excuse any kind of writing, for my girls are all from home, and I suppose I have between thirty



and forty notes and letters to answer this morning, *if possible* (which it is *not*), and yet I want to write you a long letter, and tell you all my adventures. Brussels, where Mme. Héger, understanding that I was a friend of Miss Brontë's, refused to see me; but I made M. Héger's acquaintance, and very much indeed I both like and respect him. Mr. and Mrs. Smith, junr., and Mrs. Smith, senr. (*exactly* like Mrs. Bretton). Mr. Smith said (half suspiciously, having an eye to Dr. John, I *fancied*), 'Do you know, I sometimes think Miss Brontë had my mother in her mind when she wrote Mrs. Bretton in *Villette*?' As I had not then seen Mrs. Smith I could only answer, 'Do you?' a very safe reply. I went with Mr. Smith to see the Chapter Coffee-House in Paternoster Row, where she and Anne Brontë took up their abode that first hurried rush up to London. In fact, I now think I have been everywhere where she ever lived, except of course her two little pieces of private governess-ship. I still want one or two things to complete my materials, and I am very doubtful if I can get them—at any rate, I think they will necessitate my going to Haworth again, and I am literally *afraid* of that. I will tell you the things I should *like* to have, and shall be glad if, knowing the parties, you could give me advice. First of all, I promised M. Héger to ask to see his letters to her; he is sure she would keep them, as they contained advice about her character, studies, mode of life. I doubt much if Mr. Nicholls has not destroyed them. Then again, Mr. Smith suggests—and I think with great justice—that if I might see the MS. of *The Professor* (which Mr. Nicholls told me last July that he had in his possession), I might read it, and express my opinion as to its merits and demerits as a first work. He says that much of it—whole pieces of it, as far as he remembers—are so interwoven with *Villette* that it could never be published, nor would it be worth while to give extracts, even if Mr. N. would allow it; but if I might read it, I could give the kind of criticism and opinion upon it that Mr. Brontë was anxious I should give on those published works of hers, on which (I told him) public opinion had already pronounced her fiat, and set her seal. So much for *The Professor* and M. Héger's letters. Now another of Mr. Smith's suggestions is this: Might I, do you think, see the beginning (fifty pages, Mr. Nicholls said) of the new story she had commenced? Reasons why desirable. Her happy state of mind during her married life would probably give a different character of greater hope and serenity to the fragment.

One thing more. Mr. Smith says that her letters to her father from London, giving an account of places and persons she saw, were long, constant, and minute; they would not refer to any private affairs, but to the impressions celebrated strangers made upon her, etc.

I agree with Mr. Smith that it would be a great advantage to me, as her biographer, and to her memory also, for I am convinced the more her character and talents are known the more thoroughly will both be admired and revered. But I doubt much if Mr. Nicholls won't object to granting me the sight of these things; and all the remains, etc., appear to be in his hands. Read (and return, please) this note of Mr. Brontë's to Mr. Smith in reply to his application to be allowed to have a copy *for himself* (he thought it best to ask for this *only, which he had promised him*) at first. It seems as if Mr. Brontë's own consent or opinion on these matters had very little weight with Mr. Nicholls. I found Mr. Smith an agreeable, genial-mannered man, with a keen eye to business; he is rather too stout to be handsome, but has a very pretty, Paulina-like little wife, and a little girl of eighteen months old. Mr. Williams dined there when I did: grey-haired, silent, and refined.

Now for questions I should be much obliged to you if you would answer—I am afraid to say by return of post, but I should *like* that! Did *Emily* accompany C. B. as a pupil when the latter went as teacher to Roe Head? This was evidently the *plan*; yet afterwards it seems as if it were *Anne* that went. Why did not Branwell go to the Royal Academy in London to learn painting? Did *Emily* ever go out as a governess? I know *Anne* and *Charlotte* did.

I wrote twenty pages yesterday because it rained perpetually, and I was uninterrupted; such a good day for writing may not come again for months. All August I shall be away. But I am thoroughly interested in my subject, and Mr. Smith, who looks at the affair from the experienced man of business point of view, says, 'There is no hurry; there would be a great cry of indelicacy if it were published too soon. Do it well, and never fear that the public interest in her will die away.' But a note of his (written after reading as much of my MS. which was then written, which you remember, I read to you), and which I enclose for your own *private* reading, makes me rather uncomfortable. See the passage I have marked at the side. Now I thought that I carefully pre-

served the reader's respect for Mr. Brontë, while truth and the desire of doing justice to her compelled me to state the domestic peculiarities of her childhood, which (as in all cases) contributed so much to make her what she was; yet you see what Mr. Smith says, and what reviews, in their desire for smartness and carelessness for scrupulous consideration, would be sure to say, even yet more plainly. May I call you simply 'Ellen' in the book? Initials give so little personality—they are so like a mathematical proposition. I should not even put an initial to your surname.

I have written you a terribly long letter, because, as somebody says, 'I have not time to write you a short one,' but I both wanted answers to my questions, and also wanted you to know how I am going on. We look forward to seeing you in the autumn. Mr. Gaskell desires his kind regards; every one else is from home. Your sister must not forget me, for I do not forget her and her kind reception of me.—Yours faithfully, E. C. GASKELL.

## Letter 706

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

January 8th, '57.

DEAR ELLEN,—A few days ago I got a letter from you dated 2nd May /56 along with some patterns and a fashion book. They seem to have been lost somehow, as the box ought to have come by the *Hastings*, and only now makes its appearance by the *Philip Lang*. It has come very *à propos* for a new year's gift, and the patterns were not opened twenty-four hours before a silk cape was cut out by one of them. I think I made a very impertinent request when I asked you to give yourself so much trouble. I thought you would just look out a few paper patterns which you might happen to have. Your being from home made the matter give you still more trouble. The poor woman for whom I wanted them is now our first-rate dressmaker; her drunken husband, who was her main misfortune, having taken himself off and not been heard of lately. Your account of Joe and Amelia, like all that I get of them, is very melancholy—more melancholy than illness even. It seems to show them absorbed in themselves and their misfortunes so as to shut other people out by their own miseries. That Amelia should want to keep Tim's affection all to herself I can well imagine. I often see the feeling here, especially where there is only one child. It



needs to have half a dozen and plenty to do, for the Mama to find out that she may as well let any one love the children who will take the trouble even if the children should love them in return. Poor Amelia has a hard life of it, for her one hope is so delicate, and the care they take of it is so little successful in its results, that I am afraid there is more pain than pleasure on the whole.

I am glad to hear that Mrs. Gaskell is progressing with the *Life*. I wish I had kept Charlotte's letters now, though I never felt safe to do so until latterly that I have had a home of my own. They would have been much better evidence than my imperfect recollection, and infinitely more interesting. A settled opinion is very likely to look absurd unless you give the grounds for it, and even if I could remember them, it looks as if there might be other facts which I have neglected which ought to have altered it. Your news of the 'neighbours' is very interesting; especially of Miss Wooler and my old school-fellows. Why on earth has Susan Ledgard had an attack of paralysis? She is still in the thirties. There must have been some strong cause for it. Was it mental or bodily? I wish I knew how to give you some account of my ways and doings here and the effect of my position on me. First of all, it agrees with me. I am in better health than at any time since I left school. This difference won't seem much to other people, since I never was *ill* since then; but it is very great to me, for it is just the difference between everything being a burden and everything being more or less a pleasure. Half from physical weakness and half from depression of spirits my judgment in former days was always at war with my will. There was always plenty to do, but never anything that I really felt was worth the labour of doing. My life now is not overburdened with work, and what I do has interest and attraction in it. I should think it is that part that I shall think most agreeable when I look back on my death-bed — a number of small pleasures scattered over my way, that, when seen from a distance, will seem to cover it thick. They don't cover it by any means, but I never had so many.

I look after my shopwoman; make out bills; decide who shall have 'trust' and who not. Then I go a-buying; not near such an anxious piece of business now that I understand my trade and have, moreover, a good 'credit.' I read a good deal; sometimes on the sofa; a vice I am much given to in hot weather. Then I have some friends. Not many and no geniuses—which fact pray



keep strictly to yourself, for somehow the doings and sayings of Wellington people in England always come out again to N.Z. I do not think my acquaintances are inferior to what I should have had elsewhere, even with more means and a higher position of my own. They are most of them narrow-minded and ignorant. Those of the higher class only differ by being less practical and more exacting. They are not very interesting anyway. This is my fault in part, for I can't take an interest in their concerns. It would be dreadful to me to spend as much time as they do on the details of dressing and eating—at least providing the eating. Then their children, of course, concern me but little. A book is worth any of them and a good book worth them put together. Mamas included.

Our place is thriving on the whole, though there is an attempt making just now to get up a rage for emigrating and exporting to N. Zealand. Such rages always go too far, and we shall likely get a bad character among you in consequence. It's all the same to us. I wish I had better news of your own health. I think pain in the chest a serious thing. Our east winds are much the pleasantest and healthiest we have; the soft moist north-west brings headache and depression, it even blights the trees.—Yours affectionately,

MARY TAYLOR.

## Letter 707

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

PLYMOUTH GROVE, *April 15th*, 1857.

MY DEAR MISS NUSSEY,—Among a huge heap of letters awaiting me on my arrival from Newcastle last night (where I had been since Thursday) was the enclosed. As you may suppose, it was anything but agreeable to think what you must have been setting me down as—an unlettered, unmannered, ungrateful, good-for-nothing sort of brute. I send the envelope by way of exculpation, though perhaps it leaves me open to the charge of defect—but I was obliged to write in a hurry, and was not sure whether to put on Halifax or Leeds. I hope your copy of the *Life* and the one for Miss Wooler came safe. All the notices that I have seen have been favourable, and some of the best exceedingly so. I have had a considerable number of letters too from distinguished men expressing high approval. Mr. Brontë, too, I am happy to

say, is pleased, and I can only hope that Mr. Nicholls will (as Sir J. K. Shuttleworth says) 'learn to rejoice that his wife will be known as a Christian heroine, who could bear her cross with the firmness of a martyr saint.' I have not time to give you any long account of the travellers. They were to leave Rome for Florence yesterday, after going through all the crushing and excitement of the Holy Week. I only hope they won't be kilt and spilt entirely. They intend to get as far as Venice, and then I suppose will turn their steps homeward. My two chickens here are very well, and if they were not gone to school could send their love.

Hoping your mother is better, I am, my dear Miss Nussey,  
yours very hastily but sincerely. WM. GASKELL.

## Letter 708

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

1857.

MY DEAR MISS ELLEN,—I must not detain your letter any longer, and now thank you for the loan of it. Many changes have occurred since Mary left England, and if a year must elapse before she again treads its shores, there may be many others. Yesterday I met Mrs. Marshall, and who do you think had been her guest and had just left Hornsea for Edinburgh? Mrs. Joe Taylor! I did not hear that she was inconsolable; but I am to take tea there soon and shall then hear more. The third edition has at length ventured out—our curate tells me he is assured it is quite inferior to the former one—so you see Mrs. Gaskell displayed worldly wisdom in going out of her way to furnish gossip for the discerning public. Did I name to you that Mrs. E. Gibson knows two or three young ladies in Hull who finished their education at Madame Héger's pension? Mrs. Gaskell said they read *Villette* with keen interest—of course they would. I had a nice walk with a Mrs. Goldsmith, a Suffolk lady, a visitor of the Marshalls, who was evidently delighted to meet with one who had personally known our dear Charlotte Brontë, and would not soon have wearied of a conversation in which she was the topic. Mrs. Palmer says she was more interested in her biography than in any she ever perused. I am truly sorry to hear that the vicars of Birstall and Dewsbury are both incapacitated for duty. Mrs. A.'s attack has been more severe than I had any idea of, and it is not the first. The loss of their papa would indeed be a severe trial

to dear Clifford and Marianne. May it please God to avert it for a few years at least! During the last six weeks I have been almost free from indigestion. *How thankful should I be!*

M. WOOLER.

## Letter 709

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

WELLINGTON, *June 4th*, '58.

DEAR ELLEN,—I have lately heard through Amelia that you have lost your mother and that you are leaving Brookroyd. Where to? And how will you be situated? I imagine you now with plenty of leisure and independence, but with a sense of desolation arising from the strange place you are in, and even from the want of your accustomed work and anxiety. I shall not even see Brookroyd again, and one of the people who lived there and one whom I used to see there, I shall never see more. Keep yourself well, dear Ellen, and gather round you as much happiness and interest as you can, and let me find you cheery and thriving when I come. When that will be I don't yet know; but one thing is sure, I have given over ordering goods from England, so that I must sometime give over for want of anything to sell. The last things ordered I expect to arrive about the beginning of the year 1859. In the course of that year therefore I shall be left without anything to do or motive for staying. Possibly this time twelve-month I may be leaving Wellington. Amelia writes that Tim has got her last tooth through, so that I suppose the danger is over. Certainly Amelia's life does not impress me favourably as to the happiness of even a suitable marriage. I think (my choice being free) that I would rather not have my all of earthly pleasure hang on so slender a thread, though it might be that my enjoyment were less intense. The absorption of her letters makes one tremble for her. I can well imagine that she will gradually drop all her friends out of sheer forgetfulness and be quite unconscious of her selfishness owing to the disguise it takes. I should not like to be the one to advise her to think now and then of something else, for were the poor thing to die, she would certainly think it had got its mortal injury in the time she was not thinking of it.

We are here in the height of a political crisis. The election for the highest office in the province (Superintendent) comes off in

about a fortnight. Moreover, we have just got a judge landed, for the first time these two years, and one of the members of our provincial council has been waiting for the Supreme Court to sit to go to law with the late Superintendent, who is also a candidate for re-election. There is altogether a small storm going on in our teacup, quite brisk enough to stir everything in it. My principal interest therein is the sale of election ribbons; though I am afraid, owing to the bad weather, there will be little display. Besides the elections there is nothing interesting. We all go on pretty well. I have got a pony about four feet high that carries me about ten miles from Wellington, which is much more than walking distance, to which I have been confined for the last ten years. I have given over most of the work to Miss Smith, who will finally take the business, and if we had fine weather I think I should enjoy myself. We have a very wet and early winter, and have had no earthquakes for a long time, which is always thought a bad sign. People expect a sharp one when one comes after a long interval of quiet. My main want here is for books enough to fill up my idle time. It seems to me that when I get home I will spend half my income on books, and sell them when I have read them, to make it go farther. I know this is absurd, but people with an unsatisfied appetite think they can eat enormously. It rains just now five days out of six.

Remember me kindly to Miss Wooler, and tell me more about her in your next. You must by no means give over writing to me until I tell you. If I don't sail till next year at this time you may safely write until April, *i.e.* by the March mail. Fill your letter with gossip. You are mistaken in thinking I hear much.

Describe your new dwelling and employment—where you will go or what you will do, without work. Write quickly and fully, and tell me all about it.—Yours affectionately,

MARY TAYLOR.

## Letter 710

TO MRS. NUNN

HAWORTH, NEAR KEIGHLEY,

*February 1st, 1858.*

MY DEAR MADAM,—I thank you for your kind offer of the excellent newspaper you have mentioned, but there is no necessity of sending to me, since, owing to the newspapers I take, and



the various institutions in the village, I can see the *Record*, or any other I may choose, daily. And truly, in this changeable and ever-changing world, this state of our probation, we clergymen ought to read and know what is passing, and to discern the signs of the times, so that we may be able to speak a word in season to the people committed to our charge. I have forgotten the age of my dear old friend Mr. Nunn—will you be so kind as to mention it when you next write. I am now in the eighty-first year of my age. I think he must be six or seven years younger; but it appears that his bodily strength has considerably failed him, and that it is now his duty not to exert himself, as formerly, but to be a little cautious, so that by Divine aid his useful life may be spared long for the benefit of the flock of our blessed Lord and Saviour. I preach once every Sabbath afternoon, but I cannot do more. Mr. Nicholls joins me in kind regards.—I remain, my dear madam, yours in the best of bonds, P. BRONTË.

Mrs. NUNN, near Eye, Suffolk.

## Letter 711

TO MRS. NUNN

HAWORTH, NEAR KEIGHLEY,

*October 26th, 1859.*

MY DEAR MADAM,—I thank you for the picture of the Rectory. It is *well* executed, and shows a very respectable and convenient building, which is, I hope and believe, only the *earnest* and fore-runner of '*that* House, not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.' But large and commodious as your house is, I think it has no room for a third person as a lodger, who would probably be a discordant string that would spoil your domestic harmony. You inquired whether your parcels and letters cost me anything; they all come free, and I pay for all I send to you. The newspaper account of the idle and ostentatious pageantry got up in the church, where the Gospel was once faithfully preached, grieves me. But, my dear madam, a bad spirit, some call it the spirit of the age (I fear it might rather be called the spirit of revolution, vanity, scepticism, and Romish idolatry), this ominous spirit of the age is actuating numbers; and the young, thoughtless, and vain have looked upon, loved, and greedily embraced the delusion. But Christ, who conquers death and hell, will give his

followers the victory, and make all things work together for good to those who enlist in his service, and fight the good fight of Faith, in his name, and by his wisdom and power. All things work together for good to those who love God. Yes, for good, in reference to *both* the worlds. I hope that you will be able to read this miserable scrawl. My sight is very scanty, and the day is dim. Mr. Nicholls joins me in kind regards to you and my dear old friend.—Yours very truly, in the best of bonds,

P. BRONTË.

Mrs. NUNN, Rectory, near Eye.

I have posted for you a picture of my house and church.

## APPENDIX I

## MRS. BRONTË'S ONLY LITERARY EFFORT

## THE ADVANTAGES OF POVERTY IN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

POVERTY is generally, if not universally, considered an evil; and not only an evil in itself, but attended with a train of innumerable other evils. But is not this a mistaken notion—one of those prevailing errors which are so frequently to be met with in the world and are received as uncontroverted truths? Let the understanding be enlightened by divine grace, the judgment improved and corrected by an acquaintance with the holy Scriptures, the spirit of the world subdued, and the heart filled with the earnest desires for heavenly attainments and heavenly enjoyments, and then, what is poverty? *Nothing*—or rather *something*, which, with the assistance and blessing of our Gracious Master, will greatly promote our spiritual welfare, and tend to increase and strengthen our efforts to gain that Land of pure delight, where neither our souls nor bodies can possibly know pain or want. Perhaps some who are daily and hourly sinking under the distresses and privations which attend extreme poverty, should this paper fall in the way of any such, may be ready to say that the writer never experienced its horrors, and is therefore unqualified to judge of its effects—they may indignantly exclaim, ‘Is it not an evil to be deprived of the necessaries of life? Can there be any anguish equal to that occasioned by the sight of objects, dear as your own soul, famishing with cold and hunger? Is it not an evil to hear the heart-rending cries of your children craving for that which you have it not in your power to give them? And, as an aggravation of this distress, to know that some are surfeited by abundance at the same time that you and yours are perishing for want?’ Yes, these are evils indeed of peculiar bitterness; and he must be less than man that can behold them without sympathy and an active desire to relieve them. But those sufferers possess not the qualifications described above, which alone can enable any human being to consider poverty in any other light than an evil. They have not had their hearts, understandings, and judgments changed by divine grace; nor are these the characters who can look forward to another life with the pleasing, invigorating hope of finding it to be a life of perfect, unchanging, and everlasting bliss. Such a wretched extremity of poverty is seldom experienced in this land of general benevolence. When a case of this kind occurs, it is to be feared the sufferers bring it on themselves by their own excess and imprudent folly; but even when they reap the fruit of their doings, they are not permitted

long to suffer. The penetrating eye of Christian charity soon discovers, and its hand is as soon stretched out for their relief. The poor but honest and industrious Christian, for whose benefit this humble attempt is made, is scarcely ever suffered to languish in extreme want, yet he may be exposed to great distresses, which at times he is tempted to consider evils hard to be endured: at most repines at his lot, and thinks that the God who is declared to be *merciful to all*, and whose *tender mercies* are said to be *over all His works*, has forgotten to be gracious to him. Dismiss these unworthy thoughts, my Christian friends; they come from the enemy of your immortal interests and the father of lies. Rather consider that though you have now no visible supply, and know not from whence the wants of to-morrow are to meet with relief, there is One above in Whose hands are all the riches of the earth, Who sees your necessities, and has faithfully promised that all things shall work together for your good. Consider that you are not exposed to the prevailing temptation of laying up treasure on earth. Though your circumstances prevent you from providing fortunes for your children, yet there are many honest callings and respectable trades open ever to the children of poverty whereby they may get their bread in peace and credit, and with the blessing of their Heavenly Father gain a supply for nature's wants. Being prevented from sharing in the luxuries of life, you are less liable to be assailed by the corrupt dispositions and disorderly passions which an enjoyment of these luxuries tends to produce. You think now, perhaps, that you could be temperate in the midst of plenty, but the human heart is not to be trusted, and we are assured from the sacred writings that 'it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.' Possessing the means of gratifying every perverse, idle, and inordinate inclination, who dares say he would not be led into those vain and sinful excesses which would infallibly lead to unhappiness in this world and to endless misery in the world to come? That poverty which is sanctified by true religion is perhaps the state most free from care and discontent, the farthest removed from pride and ambition, and the most calculated to promote scriptural views and feelings, and the universal welfare of the soul. The man who possesses little of this world has consequently but little to attach him to it; he is not so much tempted to be attracted by its riches nor its pleasures; he cannot experimentally love that which he does not possess; he cannot delight in that which he has no opportunity of enjoying. Having nothing to lose, he fears not the approach of the spoiler. Neither oppression nor violence can add to his wants or deprive him of his riches. As he has no property to improve or secure, he is free from the anxious inquietude and perplexing care of the man of business. If his days are spent in honest labour, his nights afford the sweet refreshment of peaceful slumbers. His coarse but wholesome meal, eaten with relish and followed by thankfulness and contentment, invigorates the active body, and fits it for the exertions necessary to earn another. Content with his lot, he envies not his more prosperous neighbour; unless, perhaps, in seasons of peculiar distress, when he has himself been relieved by the bounty of another, a wish has been excited in his heart that it were in his power to show his gratitude to his Heavenly Benefactor by contributing to the necessities of others.



But this wish is quickly repressed by the conviction that God knows what is best, and has given to each that portion which will tend most to His glory and the lasting good of His children.

Far removed from the ensnaring and tumultuous scenes of a vain, unthinking world, he is not ambitious of its honour nor proud of its fame. He does not even understand its principles nor its language. It might be said that though the poor man is not liable to the temptations which peculiarly assail the rich, yet he is liable to others which commonly prevail among the poor, such as envy, murmuring, ingratitude, and covetousness. But it is necessary to remind the reader that poverty is here considered as united with religion, and that, so united, it is exposed to fewer temptations than is a state of prosperity, and attended with greater religious advantages. The poor need not fear incurring contempt by making a religious profession. A religious and orderly conduct will ensure him commendation rather than censure. And if his habitual practice is found to agree with his profession, he will meet with that confidence, respect, and attention which he could never have experienced on any other ground. Free from the pride and prejudice of learning and philosophy, his mind is prepared to receive the truths that the Bible inculcates. He yields to the inward workings of the spirit of truth ; with simplicity receives the various and unspeakable blessings purchased for him by the Saviour's blood ; nor once thinks of opposing the weakness of human reason to the divine Revelation. He may have less leisure for reading, but he has little to call his thoughts from divine meditation and mental prayer, the practice of which tends more to keep up the life of God in the soul than the closest study and most enlarged acquaintance with human learning independent of these. Having no worldly ties, he contemplates with holy joy the inheritance laid up for the saints, and, with a hope full of assurance through the alone merits of his Redeemer, expects ere long to be made a partaker of that inheritance, and to join the heavenly throng in eternal bliss.

Taking this view of Poverty, where are the evils attending it? Do they not appear to be imaginary? But O, what words can express the great misery of those who suffer all the evils of poverty here, and that, too, by their own bad conduct, and have no hope of happiness hereafter, but rather have cause to fear that the end of this miserable life will be the beginning of another, infinitely more miserable, never, never to have an end!

It surely is the duty of all Christians to exert themselves in every possible way to promote the instruction and conversion of the poor, and, above all, to pray with all the ardour of Christian faith and love that every poor man may be a religious man. M.

Endorsed on the Manuscript in Mr. Brontë's handwriting are the words:—

The above was written by my dear wife, and sent for insertion in one of the periodical publications. Keep it as a memorial of her.

## APPENDIX II

[This document was contributed by Prof. C. C. Moore Smith, of University College, Sheffield, to the *Bookman* for October 1904, and is by his permission included here.]

## THE BRONTËS AT THORNTON

My grandmother, Miss Elizabeth Firth, was born on January 2, 1797. She was the only child of John Scholefield Firth, of Kipping House, Thornton, near Bradford, the house which a century earlier was the home of his ancestor, Dr. John Hall, a stalwart Independent, whose name is well known to the readers of Joseph Lister's *Autobiography* and Oliver Heywood's *Diaries*. Kipping House still stands, and by it a barn-like building bearing the date 1669, which was ready for use as a meeting-house when the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 allowed meeting-houses to be opened. The licence granted to Dr. Hall for this purpose is now in the possession of my cousin, Mr. H. E. Franks. My grandmother was sent in the years 1812-1813 to the famous ladies' school established at Crofton Hall, near Wakefield, and presided over by Miss Richmal Mangnall, the author of *Mangnall's Questions*. Leaving school in June 1813 she returned to her home at Thornton. A year later her mother (before marriage, Miss Elizabeth Holt) was thrown out of a gig and killed instantaneously before her own windows. Accordingly my grandmother—as a young girl of eighteen—was keeping house for her father, when in 1815 the Rev. Patrick Brontë removed from Hartshead to succeed the Rev. Thos. Atkinson as incumbent of Thornton Chapel.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Brontë had married (Dec. 29, 1812) Miss Maria Branwell of Penzance, and two daughters, Maria and a second infant, had been born to him before his removal to Thornton on 19th May 1815. My grandmother naturally made speedy acquaintance with the new clergyman and his wife, and when the baby daughter (born at Hartshead on Feb. 8th) was christened at Thornton on August 26th, Mr. Firth was its godfather, and Miss Firth was godmother together with Miss Branwell, the child's aunt. It was probably in honour of my grandmother that the child was named Elizabeth. From this time onwards till the Brontës left Thornton for Haworth<sup>2</sup> there was constant friendly intercourse between

<sup>1</sup> The old Bell Chapel at Thornton was demolished about fifteen years ago after the opening of a new church.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Gaskell, *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, p. 26 (ed. 1891), states that the removal took place on 25th Feb. 1820. Curiously enough, under this very date my grandmother writes, 'Mr. Brontë was licensed to Haworth,' but from subsequent entries it would seem that the Brontës still remained at Thornton for some time longer. On April 5 the entry in the diary is, 'Took leave of Mr. Brontë before leaving home.' It would seem that the Brontës left Thornton between this date and May 2, when Miss Firth returned from Scarborough.

the clergyman's family at Kipping House (Mr. Firth had been married again on 6th Sept. 1815 to Miss Ann Greame). During these years at Thornton all the rest of Mr. Brontë's children were born, Charlotte on April 21, 1816, Patrick Branwell (called in my grandmother's diary on the day of his birth Branwell Patrick) on June 26, 1817, Emily Jane on July 30, 1818, and Anne on Jan. 17, 1820. I may point out that these dates, except that of the birth of Charlotte, seem not to have been known to the writer of the article on the Brontës in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. My grandmother was again godmother to Anne Brontë, and, as I have always been told, to Charlotte, though I do not find the latter fact recorded by herself. I have also heard that my grandfather, Mr. Franks, claimed to have been Charlotte's godfather.

During all the years from 1812 to 1820 my grandmother put down in the briefest and barest form in a pocket-book some fact for almost each day of her uneventful life. They are in a sense very insignificant entries, but such is the interest felt in that strange Brontë household, that it seems worth while to put into print even the number of times that the Rev. Patrick Brontë went out to tea, if only to show that Mrs. Gaskell's picture of the stern man, unsocial in his habits, however true of the Haworth time, is not true of the years spent at Thornton. And other entries, again, help to make a picture of the daily employments and interests of a young lady living in the country in the time when Miss Austen was drawing other such young ladies in her novels. After 1820 the entries in Miss Firth's diary are more scanty and have little more than a family interest. The volumes extended to 1825, but that for 1821 is unfortunately missing. In that year (on Sept. 15) Mrs. Brontë died at Haworth. Mr. Firth had died on Dec. 27, 1819, and his daughter lived on at Kipping in her own right with her stepmother, to whom she evidently became much attached. At this time, according to a family tradition, Mr. Brontë wooed Miss Firth to be his second wife, and his letters to her were only destroyed just before the Miss Brontës became famous. It is interesting to surmise how the lives of the sisters and the history of English literature would have been affected if Mr. Brontë's income had been largely increased by the addition of Miss Firth's little fortune, and if his children had had the motherly care of one who, according to all accounts, was a most sweet and perfect woman. Perhaps literature gained by the sisters' loss: and it was necessary for them to learn in suffering what they taught in romance. Mr. Brontë did not succeed in his suit, perhaps because the lady's heart was already engaged elsewhere. Miss Firth left her childhood's home on April 27, 1824, and was married on the following 21st Sept. to the Rev. James Clarke Franks, Vicar of Huddersfield, son of an old family friend, the Rev. James Franks, incumbent of Sowerby Bridge, Halifax. I have a record that on their wedding tour Mr. and Mrs. Franks called to see the Miss Brontës at Cowan Bridge, where they were at the Clergy Daughters' School, directed by the Rev. William Carus Wilson, and in my grandmother's account-book there is the entry, '3 Miss Brontës, 2/6 each.' The letters from Charlotte Brontë and her father which I include in this paper, show that Mrs. Franks's interest in the motherless girls was not lost. But already at the date of Charlotte's second letter, June 2, 1836, my grandmother's health had failed in consequence of an attack of the



prevalent influenza in 1835, and she died when on a visit to her friend Dr. Outhwaite at Bradford, on 11th Sept. 1837. My grandfather left Huddersfield in 1840, and from that time neither he nor his children probably saw any of the Brontës again.

There is a lady now living at an advanced age from whose bright intellect I had hoped to have gleaned a few memories of the early days recorded in Miss Firth's diary. But she was born, it seems, a few years too late. She writes: 'My recollection of your grandmother is simply that she was the sweetest lady I have ever seen, but I think I only saw her once, on her return from her wedding trip. I only saw the Miss Brontës once, and had difficulty in realising one of those very queer girls as the authoress of *Jane Eyre*. I was very little at Kipping, a raw school-girl, 80 years since.'

I append extracts from Miss Firth's diary, which illustrate the life led by the Brontës at Thornton: <sup>1</sup>—

1815

*March 5th.* The last time I heard Mr. Atkinson preach. *16th.* We met Mr. Atkinson, he wished me good-bye. *17th.* I came to Lascelles Hall.

*April 30th.* Mr. Atkinson preached his farewell sermons at Thornton Chapel from these words—Romans, c. x. v. 1st; 2 Corinthians, c. xiii. v. 11th—'Finally, brethren, farewell.' The congregation appeared much affected, and at the conclusion sung the hymn beginning:

'With all Thy power, O Lord, defend  
Him whom we now to Thee commend.'

*May 19th.* Mr. Brontë came to reside at Thornton.

*June 6th.* We came home in the evening. *7th.* I called at Mr. Brontë's. *9th.* We met Mr. Brontë's family at Mr. Kay's. *11th.* See St. Matthew, c. xiii. vs. 3-9. The Parable of the Sower. The first time I heard Mr. Brontë preach. *12th.* Mrs. Brontë and Miss Branwell called. *14th.* Drank tea at Mrs. Brontë's. *15th.* I called at Mr. Brontë's. *20th.* We had the Outhwaites, Brontës, and Miss M. Ibbotson to dinner. *26th.* We walked with Mr. Brontës <sup>2</sup> to the top of Allerton.

*July 4th.* I walked to Swill Hill with Mr. Brontës. *19th.* I called at Mr. Brontë's. *23rd.* See Psalm xli. A collection was made for the widows and orphans of those who fell at the battle of Waterloo. *24th.* Mrs. Brontë and Miss Branwell called.

*August 1st.* Mr. Brontë called. *3rd.* I went to sit with Mrs. Brontë in the evening. *21st.* Mrs. Brontë, Miss Branwell, and I drank tea at Mr. Tom Ibbotson's. *26th, Sunday.* Mr. Brontë's second daughter was christened Elizabeth by Mr. Fennel. My papa was godfather. Miss Branwell and I were godmothers.

*September 2nd.* I called at Mr. Brontë's. *6th.* My papa was married to

<sup>1</sup> I have been told that the clerk of Thornton Chapel, who was something of a curiosity, once when giving out in church a notice about the schools announced 'Miss Firth will teach the graces'—his rendering of 'will teach gratis.'

<sup>2</sup> This form of expression occurs so often that it would seem to be an abbreviation for Mr. Brontë's family, or 'Mr. and Mrs. Brontë.'



Miss Greame at Bradford Church by Mr. Morgan.<sup>1</sup> The bridal party dined at Exley and came here in the evening. 18th. Mr. Brontë called. 20th. Mr. Brontë and Mrs. Morgan drank tea here. 21st. We called at Mr. Brontë's.

October 11th. Oratorio and concert. 12th. Oratorio of the *Messiah*. Christ's Church at Bradford was consecrated. 13th. We attended the oratorio and concert as we had done the two preceding days. 24th. Miss Branwell called. 25th. We drank tea at Mr. Brontë's. 30th. Mr. Brontë drank tea here.

November 16th. Miss Branwell and I went to J. Jowett's. 30th. Miss Branwell came to tea.

December 6th. I attended a chemical lecture by Mr. Webster. 12th. Mr. Brontë called. 18th. I attended Mr. Lancaster's lecture. 19th. I attended a lecture on optics by Mr. Webster. 21st. I attended Mr. Webster's second astronomical lecture. 25th. Mr. Brontë took tea here.

## 1816

January 6th. Mrs. Firth and I called at Mr. Brontë's. 13th. I called at Mr. Brontë's. 18th. A day of public thanksgiving for the restoration of Peace. 22nd. Read *Lord of the Isles* again. 23rd. Mr. Brontë drank tea here. 30th. Mrs. Brontë and Miss Branwell called.

February 3rd. Mr. Brontë called. 5th. Mrs. Brontë and Miss Branwell called. 7th. Mr. Brontë called. 8th. Elizabeth Brontë was a year old this day. 9th. Mrs. Brontë and I called at Mrs. J. Ibbotson's. 14th. I called at Mr. Brontë's. 18th. Sunday. Mr. Morgan preached. 21st. I called at Mr. Brontë's.

March 13th. Miss Branwell drank tea here. Mr. Brontë came in the evening.

April 21st, Sunday. C. Brontë was born.

May 23rd. My papa was worse again; another blister. 24th. Papa had twelve leeches on. 25th. Mr. Brontë went to prayer with my papa. 27th. Mr. Brontë again. My papa was very ill. 29th. My papa's disorder came to a crisis and, thank God, took a favourable turn.

June 4th. Mr. Brontë called. 7th. Called at Mr. Brontë's. 9th. I was most happy to see my dear papa once more downstairs. May I be truly thankful for this great mercy. 17th. Mrs. Brontë called. 18th. Mr. and Mrs. Brontë and Miss Branwell came to tea.

July 1st. Mr. Brontë drank tea here. 4th. Called at Mr. Brontë's. 17th. We drank tea at Mr. Brontë's. 18th. The ladies assisted me in altering a gown. 25th. Mrs. Brontë and Miss Branwell drank tea here the last time. 28th. I took leave of Miss Branwell. She kissed me and was much affected. She left Thornton that evening. 29th. We called at Mr. Brontë's. 31st. We called at Mr. Brontë's.

<sup>1</sup> About the same time as Mr. Brontë married Miss Maria Branwell of Penzance, the Rev. Wm. Morgan had married her cousin. Mr. Morgan was afterwards incumbent of Christ Church, Bradford.

*August 1st.* Mr. Brontë to tea. *11th.* Thorntontide; a wet day; did not go to church. *12th.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. Had a party of twenty-nine, chiefly from Bradford.

*September 23rd.* Came home. Mr. Brontë called. *30th.* I called at Mr. Brontë's. (In Cash Account for September 1816 occurs the entry: 'Frock for one of the Brontës, 16s.')

*October 12th.* Mr. Brontë drank tea here. *22nd.* Mrs. Brontë called.

*November 14th.* Mr. and Mrs. Brontë to tea. *19th.* Tea at Mr. Brontë's. We observed a beautiful eclipse of the sun; the sky was very clear till it arrived at its greatest obscurity; it was afterwards enveloped in clouds—a great gloom. *30th.* We called at Mr. Brontë's.

*December 11th.* Mr. Brontë at tea. *13th.* Mr. and Mrs. Brontë to tea. *16th.* Mr. and Mrs. Brontë to dinner. *28th.* I called at Mr. Brontë's.

## 1817

*January 30th.* Mrs. Brontë called.

*February 1st.* Mr. Brontë called. *12th.* I called at Mr. Brontë's. *13th.* Mrs. Brontë to tea. *15th.* Got two new shillings. A new silver coinage was exchanged for the old. *21st.* Mr. Brontë to tea. *26th.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. *28th.* Tea at Mr. Brontë's.

*March 3rd.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. *13th.* Mr. and Mrs. Brontë to tea. *18th.* Miss Thomas came to Mr. Brontë's. *19th.* Mrs. Kays and Mr. Brontë to tea. *20th.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. *21st.* Tea at Mr. Brontë's. *27th.* Went to Bradford. *28th.* I came home with Mr. and Mrs. Brontë. Bought Mason on *Self-Knowledge*. *31st.* Mr. and Mrs. Brontë called.

*April 11th.* We had Mr. Brontës to tea. *22nd.* Called at Spring Head with Mr. Brontë and Miss Thomas. *23rd.* Walked with Mrs. Brontë and Miss Thomas.

*May 2nd.* We called at Mr. Brontë's. *6th.* Mrs. Brontë called. *8th.* Finished moss-basket. A ramble with Miss Thomas. *9th.* Mr. Horsfall and Mr. and Mrs. Brontë's family dined here. *11th.* Sunday-school commences. *13th.* My papa and Mr. Brontë went to Wakefield to vote for Mr. Scott. Stopped all night at Longlands. *14th.* They came home. *16th.* Walked to Lower Height Farm, Miss Thomas with us. *18th.* I began of attending Sunday-school. F. Greame and Miss Thomas with me.

*June 7th.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. *9th.* Mrs. Brontë called. *12th.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. *21st.* Read *Old Mortality*; did not like it. *24th.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. *26th.* Went to see Mrs. Brontë. Branwell Patrick was born early in the morning.

*July 1st.* I drank tea at Mr. Brontë's. *7th.* I called to see Mrs. Brontë. *18th.* We saw the Confirmation and Visitation at Wakefield.

*August 6th.* We called at Mr. Brontë's. *7th.* Mr. Brontë called. *11th.* Mr. Brontë called. *26th.* Mr. Brontë to supper.

*September 8th.* Mr. Brontës to tea. *23rd.* Mr. Sterndale sketched Kipping. *24th.* Called at Mr. Brontë's.

*October 8th.* Mr. Brontës to tea. *16th.* Mr. Brontës to tea. *31st.* Mr. Brontë called.

*November 3rd.* Mr. Brontë and I drank tea with Mrs. John Ibbotson. *6th.* I went to Bradford with Mr. Brontë. The Princess Charlotte of Wales died. *12th.* Mr. and Mrs. Franks and Mrs. Naylor came and Mr. Redhead and Mr. Brontës dined here. *18th.* The ever to be lamented Princess Charlotte was interred. Service in all places of worship. *19th.* Mr. Brontë called. *24th.* I drank tea at Mr. Brontë's.

*December 1st.* Mr. Brontë called.

## 1818

*January 7th.* Mr. Brontë to supper. *8th.* Mr. Brontë spent the evening here. *12th.* I called at Mr. Brontë's. *22nd.* I drank tea with Mrs. Brontë. *27th.* Tea at Mr. Brontë's.

*February 12th.* Expected Mr. Brontë to tea, but Mrs. B. was poorly. *16th.* I called at Mr. Brontë's.

*April 16th.* Mr. and Mrs. Brontë took tea here. *20th.* We walked to Bradford with Mr. Brontë and returned the same evening. *22nd.* Read *Lalla Rookh*.

*May 13th.* Read Young's *Night Thoughts*. *19th.* Mr. Brontë, F. O.,<sup>1</sup> and I went to Ogden Kirk. *22nd.* Read *Remains* of H. K. White. *29th.* Mr. Brontë called.

*June 12th.* Mr. Brontë drank tea here. *15th.* Mr. Brontë to tea. *25th.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. *26th.* Mr. Brontës and Miss Ibbotson to dinner. *29th.* F. O., Mr. Brontë, and I took tea at Mr. J. Ibbotson's.

*July 8th.* Mr. Brontë called. *11th.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. *15th.* I called at Mr. Brontë's. *16th.* Mr. Brontë called here. *30th.* Emily Jane Brontë was born.

*August 17th.* We were at Mr. Brontë's. *19th.* Mr. Brontë to dinner. *25th.* I drank tea at Mr. Brontë's.

*September 24th.* Mr. Brontës to tea.

*October 8th.* Mr. Brontës to dinner. *23rd.* Tea at Mr. Brontë's.

*November 2nd.* Mr. Brontës and Miss Ibbotson to tea. *9th.* I went to hear Mr. Richmond yesterday. Came home with Mr. Brontë. *10th.* Went to look at the Angel in Thornton Chapel. *17th.* Mr. Brontë called. *19th.* Heard of the Queen's death. *22nd.* Put on mourning for the Queen. *30th.* Mr. Brontës to tea.

*December 4th.* Called at Mrs. Brontë's. *6th.* Thornton Chapel reopened. *8th.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. *9th.* Repaired Chapel books. *10th.* Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Miss Fanny Outhwaite of Bradford, a schoolfellow and almost a sister to Miss Firth, stood with her as godmother to Anne Brontë and left the latter £200 by will.

Brontës to tea. 11<sup>th</sup>. We drank tea at Mr. Brontë's. 17<sup>th</sup>. I went to Bradford with Mr. Brontë. 19<sup>th</sup>. Came home with Mr. Brontë. 26<sup>th</sup>. Called at Mr. Brontë's. 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë to tea.

## 1819

*January 2nd.* Read the *Heart of Midlothian*. 5<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontës to tea. 8<sup>th</sup>. M. E. and C. Brontë to tea. 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontës to tea. 26<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë in the evening.

*March 4<sup>th</sup>.* Mr. Brontës to tea. 8<sup>th</sup>. Called at Mr. Brontë's. 17<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë called. 26<sup>th</sup>. Called at Mr. Brontë's. 27<sup>th</sup>. Tea at Mr. Brontë's.

*May 6<sup>th</sup>.* Mr. Brontës to tea.

*September 29<sup>th</sup>.* Came home in safety, thank God. 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë to breakfast. He and Mrs. Brontë to tea.

*October 4<sup>th</sup>.* The little Brontës called. 7<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontës to tea. 12<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontës to tea. 19<sup>th</sup>. Tea at Mr. Brontë's. 25<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë to tea. 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. and Mrs. Brontë to tea.

*November 2nd.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. 3<sup>rd</sup>. My mother and I walked to Swirrel,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Brontë with us. 6<sup>th</sup>. Called at Mr. Brontë's. 11<sup>th</sup>. I called at Mr. Brontë's. 12<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë called. 16<sup>th</sup>. I called to see Mrs. Brontë. 18<sup>th</sup>. I called at Mr. Brontë's. 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mr. Brontë to tea.

*December 3<sup>rd</sup>.* I called at Mr. Brontë's. 10<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë called. 11<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë to supper. 15<sup>th</sup>. Drank tea at Mr. Brontë's. 23<sup>rd</sup>. We called at Mr. Brontë's. 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë to tea. 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë and I went to Bradford.

## 1820

*January 4<sup>th</sup>.* Mr. Brontë called. 6<sup>th</sup>. Read Goldsmith's *History of Rome*. 7<sup>th</sup>. Called at Mr. Brontë's. 17<sup>th</sup>. Anne Brontë born. The other children spent the day here. (The Cash Account for January 1820 contains the entry, 'Gave at A. Brontë's christening, £1.') 18<sup>th</sup>. I called at Mr. Brontë's. 26<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë to tea.

*February 18<sup>th</sup>.* Called at Mr. Brontë's. 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Brontë in the evening. 23<sup>rd</sup>. Tea at Mr. Brontë's. 25<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë was licensed to Haworth.

*March 3<sup>rd</sup>.* Mr. and Mrs. Brontë to dinner. 8<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë in the evening. 13<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë in the evening. 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brontë called. 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. and Mrs. Brontë to tea. 25<sup>th</sup>. Anne Brontë was christened by Mr. Morgan; F. Outhwaite and I were godmothers. 31<sup>st</sup>. Good Friday; no service. We sat up expecting the Radicals.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A farm at Thornton belonging to Mr. Firth.

<sup>2</sup> I have been told that Mr. Brontë, who had seen the Irish rebellion, by his prophecies of what was coming in England, almost frightened Mr. Firth to death, so that he had all his windows barred up in consequence of Mr. Brontë's warnings.



*April 3rd.* I called at Mr. Brontë's. *5th.* Took leave of Mr. Brontë before leaving home.

*June 6th.* Mr. Brontë came. Mr. Brontë went home.

*December 3rd.* My papa complained of shivering. *5th.* My papa was very ill. *9th.* My papa worse. *10th.* My papa was carried into the drawing-room. *13th.* Mr. Brontë dined here. *17th.* Alarmed with my father. *18th.* My papa very ill. *20th.* My dear papa suffered great depression of mind. *21st.* By God's blessing and Mr. Brontë's conversation became more happy. *22nd.* In holy ecstasies all day, blessed be God. *23rd.* Pretty composed. *24th.* My poor father's ideas still wandering, but very cheerful. *26th.* My dear father's last words at half-past eleven—All's well, all's happy. *27th.* At half-past two A.M. he breathed his last without a struggle.

The following letters will explain themselves :—<sup>1</sup>

## I

Addressed—Mrs. Franks, Vicarage, Huddersfield.

Postmark—Bradford, Yorks. Ap. 29, 1831. Postal charge, 6d

HAWORTH, near BRADFORD,  
YORKSHIRE, *April 28th, 1831.*

DEAR MADAM,—Having heard of your kind attention to Charlotte, I have taken the liberty of writing to thank both Mr. Franks and you for this, and to assure you that we have not forgotten, in our little family, your other various acts of kindness. Charlotte would be highly gratified. She still remembered having seen you at Kipping, and has often heard us speak of you, whilst we took a retrospective view of Good Old Times. I have just received a letter from our mutual friend, Miss Outhwaite, which has given me some uneasiness. It appears that some whose opinions I highly value greatly misunderstand my motives, in being an advocate for temperate reform, both in church and state. I am in all respects *now*, what I *was* when I lived in Thornton—in regard to all political considerations. A warmer or truer friend to church and state does not breathe the vital air. But, after many years' mature deliberation, I am fully convinced that, unless the *real* friends of our excellent institutions come forward and advocate the cause of temperate reform, the inveterate enemies will avail themselves of the opportunity which this circumstance would give them, and will work on the popular feeling—already but too much excited—so as to cause, in all probability, general insurrectionary movements, and bring about a revolution. We see what has been lately done in France. We know that the Duke of Wellington's declaration against reform was the principal cause of the removal of him and the other ministers from power. And there is now another instance before our eyes of the impolicy of this perverseness. The anti-reformers have im-

<sup>1</sup> The following letters, except No. V., are in the possession of my cousin, Mr. H. E. Franks, and are published by his kind permission.

prudently thrown the ministers into a minority, and consequently Parliament is dissolved by the King in person, and in all probability another Parliament will soon be returned, which may be less particular than the other, and perhaps go too far in the way of reformation.

Both, then, because I think moderate, or temperate reform, is wanted—and that this would satisfy all wise and reasonable people, and weaken the hands of our real enemies, and preserve the church and state from ruin—I am an advocate for the Bill, which has been just thrown out of Parliament. It is with me merely an affair of conscience and judgment, and sooner than violate the dictates of either of these, I would run the hazard of poverty, imprisonment, and death. My friends—or some of them, at least—may differ from me as to the *line of conduct* which ought to be followed, but our *motives* and our *good wishes* towards church and state are the same.

But to come nearer home. I have for nearly a year past been in but a very delicate state of health. I had an inflammation in my lungs last summer, and was in immediate and great danger for several weeks. For the six months last past I have been weak in body, and my spirits have often been low. I was for about a month unable to take the church duty. I now perform it, though with considerable difficulty. I am, certainly, a little better; yet I fear I shall never fully recover. I sometimes think that I shall fall into a decline. But I am in the Lord's hands, and hope that he will at the last give me a happy issue out of all my troubles, and take me for ever into His heavenly kingdom. We have been much concerned to hear from time to time that you have not been quite so strong as usual. It is our earnest wish and prayer that the Lord may support and comfort you, and spare you long and in mercy to your husband and your children. I have only once been at Kipping since I last saw you and Mrs. Firth there. The family were kind to me, but I missed my old friends, and I could not feel comfortable, and I soon departed, intending never to call again. Miss Branwell still continues with me, and kindly superintends my little family, and they all join with me in the kindest and most respectful regards. When you write to, or see, Mrs. Firth, be so kind as to remember us all to her in the most respectful and affectionate manner. Be so good also to thank Mr. Franks in our name for his kind attention to Charlotte, and believe me to be, dear madam, very respectfully and truly yours,

P. BRONTË.

## II

ROE HEAD, May 1831.

DEAR MADAM,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of the parcel which arrived the other day from Huddersfield, and to thank yourself for the frock and muslin and Miss Outhwaite for the shawl which she has so kindly sent me. My chilblains are quite well. I am sorry I was out when Mr. Atkinson called the other day. Pray give my love to Mrs. Firth, and present my thanks to her for her welcome note. The Miss Woolers desire their kindest respects to you; they are much obliged to Mr. Franks for the loan of *Keith on the Prophecies*, with which they were

greatly pleased. Accept, dear madam, my sincere thanks for all the kindness you have shown me, and permit me to subscribe myself,—Yours gratefully and affectionately,  
C. BRONTË.

Has Mrs. F—— sent the parcel to

Mrs. FRANKS,

Vicarage,

HUDDERSFIELD?

### III

Addressed—Mrs. Franks, Vicarage, Huddersfield.

Postmark—Bradford, Yorks, Jy. 7, 1835.

Postal charge, 6d. Seal 'B.'

HAWORTH, near BRADFORD, YORKSHIRE, *July 6, 1835.*

MY DEAR MADAM,—As two of my dear children are soon to be placed near you, I take the liberty of writing to you a few lines in order to request both you and Mr. Franks to be so kind as to interpose with your advice and counsel to them in any case of necessity, and, if expedient, to write to Miss Branwell or me if our interference should be requisite. I will charge them strictly to attend to what you may advise, though it is not my intention to speak to them of this letter. They both have good abilities, and as far as I can judge their principles are good also, but they are very young, and unacquainted with the ways of this delusive and insnaring world; and though they will be placed under the superintendence of Miss Wooler, who will I doubt not do what she can for their good, yet I am well aware that neither they nor any other can ever, in this land of probation, lie beyond the reach of temptation. It is my design to send my son, for whom, as you may remember, my kind and true friends, Mr. Firth and Mrs. Firth, were sponsors, to the Royal Academy for Artists in London; and my dear little Anne I intend to keep at home for another year under her aunt's tuition and my own. For these dispositions I feel I am indebted, under God, to you, and Miss Outhwaite, and Mrs. Firth and other kind friends; and for every act of kindness I feel truly grateful. It has given us all unfeigned pleasure to learn that your health is nearly restored, and that Mr. Franks and your dear little children are all well. Several years ago I saw in Bradford a fine little child of yours, whom I took into my arms and would have nursed, but it took the alarm and would not stay with me; and so I was obliged to return it to Miss Outhwaite, in whom it placed greater confidence. My own health is generally but *very* delicate, yet through a gracious Providence, and with great care, I am for the most part able to perform my various

ministerial duties; indeed I have never been very well since I left Thornton. My happiest days were spent there. In this place I have received civilities, and have, I trust, been civil to all, but I have not tried to make any friends, nor have I met with any whose mind was congenial with my own. I have not been at Thornton or Kipping for many years. The last time I was there I travel'd over some of my ancient paths and thought of my dear wife and children whom death had removed, and when I was in the church and reflected that my beloved friend, with whom I was wont to take sweet counsel, was beneath my feet, sadness came over my heart; and afterwards, as I walked round your garden, I called to mind *all* my dear friends who were removed from thence—by the vicissitudes of life—and I soon found the *whole* aspect of affairs to be *entirely* changed; and so I returned home, fully intending to visit Thornton and Kipping no more, unless I should be in a great measure forced by reason of circumstances. I have heard, however, that some alterations and perhaps a few improvements have been made there. But of those you must know more than I do, as probably you often revisit the place of your nativity and the scenes of your early youth. Amidst all the chances, changes, and trials of this mortal life, we have still the glorious conviction on our minds that we may have our hope immovably anchored in heaven, by the throne of God, in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And I trust this blessed consideration will be a never-failing source of comfort to you during the remainder of your journey through life, and especially at that last hour when you will step out of time into eternity. We are now, as members of the Church of England, placed under peculiar trials outwardly from the numerous and inveterate enemies of both the church and state, and we may have enemies within. Yet still, if we look to the Lord in humility, patience, and faith, and use the appropriate scriptural means, we shall at last come off more than conquerors over death and hell, and obtain houses, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Be so good as to give my very kind and respectful regards to Mr. Franks, and to my old and kind friends, Mrs. Firth and Miss Outhwaite, when you see them; and also excuse the trouble which I have here given you, and believe me, my dear madam, ever yours, very sincerely and truly,  
P. BRONTË.

## IV

Addressed—Mrs. Franks, Vicarage, Huddersfield, Yorkshire.

Postmark—Bradford, Yorks, Ju. 14, 1836. 'Seal B.'

Postal charge, 6d.

HAWORTH, near BRADFORD, YORKSHIRE, *June 13th, 1836.*

MY DEAR MADAM,—My dear little Charlotte has informed me that you and Mr. Franks have been so kind as to invite her and Anne to pay you a visit for a week, but that through impatience, as is very natural, they have curtail'd that invitation to a few days. I have written to them to countermand this intention. I esteem it as a high privilege that they should be under your roof for a time, where, I am sure, they will see and



hear nothing but what, under Providence, must necessarily tend to their best interest in both the worlds. You I have long known, Mr. Franks' character I am well acquainted with through the medium of authentic report; and hence I came to this conclusion. I have written to Charlotte and Anne to this effect, but as my letter may not reach them (owing to a bye-post) in due time, I will thank you to communicate to them this intelligence. I will send the horse and gig for them to your house, and, if necessary, they may return from thence by Roe Head. In these sentiments Miss Branwell perfectly agrees with me, and at the same time joins with me and my family in the most respectful and kind compliments and regards to you and Mr. Franks, and to Mr. and Mrs. Atkinson when you see them. For many years I have visited no friends in Bradford, but, having heard that our old friend, Miss Outhwaite, had broken her arm, I went over a few days ago to that town, where I saw those who awakened in me many lively recollections of '*Auld Lang Syne*.'

On some, perhaps on all, time had made a difference; but there was only *one* whom I did not at first recognise. They complimented me, in general, on *renewing* my age; but perhaps this was owing to their kind partiality.

Sincerely and ardently wishing and praying for your health and happiness, both here and hereafter,—I remain, my dear madam, your old friend and obliged servant,

P. BRONTË

## V

DEAR MADAM,—I have been obliged to delay answering your kind invitation until I could fix a time for accepting it. Till this morning Miss Wooler had not decided when her school should break up; she has now fixed upon Friday the 17th of this month for the commencement of the vacation. On that day, if all be well, Anne and I hope to have the very great pleasure of seeing you at Huddersfield. We are both extremely glad to hear that your health is at least partially recovered, and I *do* hope the fine weather we have recently had may contribute to confirm it. Changes, I have no doubt, have taken place in your little family since I last saw it. John must now be grown a very fine boy indeed, and dear little Henry and Elizabeth must also have risen some grades in the ascent of life. When I first heard of Miss Outhwaite's accident it shocked me much, but I trust her good constitution will soon get the better of its effects. I feel anxious to know how she recovers. We propose coming by the four or five o'clock coach on Friday afternoon and returning by an early morning coach on Monday as papa, I fear, will scarcely be willing to dispense with us longer at home, even though we should be staying with so valued a friend as yourself. Excuse what is faulty in this hasty scrawl, my dear madam, and do not think me negligent in having so long delayed to answer your kind note, because I really could not help it; accept my own and my sister's respectful and sincere love, and believe me to be, affectionately yours,

C. BRONTË.

ROE HEAD, *June 2nd*, '36.

A pencil drawing by Charlotte Brontë is in my keeping, given by her, no doubt, to my grandmother. It is executed on a card with an embossed

frame in the fine or finicky manner of the period, and represents a castle, with moat, bridge, trees, and two very badly drawn figures. It is inscribed in a flowing hand on the right of the foreground, 'Ludlow Castle, Shropshire,' but more interesting is the 'C. Brontë' in minute characters on the left. As has been said, my grandmother died on 11th September 1837.

## VI

Addressed—Rev. J. C. Franks, Vicarage, Huddersfield.

Postmark—Bradford, Yorks, Ja. 11, 1839.

Stamped—Bradford Yor(ks) Penny Post. Postal charge, 6d.

HAWORTH, near BRADFORD,

YORKSHIRE, *Jan'y. 10th*, 1839.

REVD. AND DEAR SIR,—I have lately written to several Clergymen requesting that they would exert themselves to find for me a suitable Clerical Assistant. I have got a grant from the Pastoral Aid Society, in case I can procure a man congenial with their sentiments, and who would be active, as well as zealous. Their conditions, though not unreasonable, are somewhat strict—a good deal more so, I believe, than those are generally imposed by the Clergy Aid Society. Will you be so good as to give me your advice and assistance on this occasion? The Bishop, to whom I have applied, has been very kind and attentive to my case, and offers, if no better may be, to ordain on my Nomination. I know not what your religious opinions may be on some particular points, but it is expedient that on this occasion I should candidly tell you some of mine, lest inconvenience might arise from a collision with my future Assistant in our preaching and exhortation. As far as I know myself, I think I may venture to say that I am no Bigot. Yet I could not feel comfortable with a coadjutor who would deem it his duty to preach the appalling doctrines of personal Election and Reprobation. As I should consider these decidedly derogatory to the Attributes of God, so also I should be fearful of evil consequence to the hearers from the enforcement of final perseverance as an essential article of belief. I am well aware that many Clergymen, far wiser and better than I am, do not accord with me here; but as I freely leave them to the possession of their views, so I hope that they will kindly permit me to enjoy mine. I want for this region a plain rather than an able preacher; a zealous, but at the same time a judicious man—one not fond of innovation, but desirous of proceeding *on the good old plan*—which, alas! has often been *mar'd*, but never *improved*. I earnestly wish that some of the clergy in our excellent Establishment were as solicitous for improvement as they are for change, and that they would give less way to the hazardous fitful air of popularity. The signs of the times in which we live are of ominous portent. Without our Citadel we have numerous vigilant, inveterate, and active enemies; and within, many who are utterly unsafe either through shallow ignorance or evil design. Yet, blessed be God, there has lately been an increase of men of great learning, genuine piety, and vast resources of the most valuable kind, and who are as willing as they are able to stand forward at all hazards, in order to do their duty, as Ministers of the Gospel, and good members of

society. God and His Holy Word, too, are on our side, and thus, after all, it may prove, ere long, that the gloomy season we have may only be the immediate forerunner of an early dawn and a bright and cheering day.

I have written a longer letter than I intended—but I felt I was addressing the late partner of one of the best and most esteem'd friends that my family and I have ever had, and whose memory is still held in lively remembrance by us, though she is herself removed to another, and a better, world.

All my little flock join with me in the kindest and most respectful regards to you and yours.—I remain, Revd. and dear Sir, yours very truly,

PATRICK BRONTË.

The Rev. J. C. FRANKS,  
Vicar of Huddersfield.

Probably from 1840, the date of my grandfather's leaving Huddersfield, there was no further intercourse between him or his children and the family of Haworth Parsonage.

C. C. MOORE SMITH.

SHEFFIELD.

## APPENDIX III

'THE BRONTËS AT COWAN BRIDGE,' BY THE  
LATE REV. ANGUS M. MACKAY

It will be remembered that after the publication of *Jane Eyre* a fierce controversy broke out about this gentleman's character.<sup>1</sup> Some, like the elderly clergyman who first recognised the portrait in the novel, asserted that 'he deserved the chastisement he had got.' Others declared that he had been slandered. His son-in-law maintained that Charlotte 'saw the scenes of her childhood through the glass of her own imagination, and certainly under the colour of prejudice,' and pronounced the portrait of Mr. Carus Wilson a wild caricature. So far as this controversy touches Mr. Wilson's motives we have nothing to do with it, except to acknowledge that his beliefs were sincere, and that his intentions throughout were undoubtedly good. Leaving motives aside altogether, we have only to ask, were Mr. Wilson's actions and opinions such as Charlotte has depicted? and were they such that if she had witnessed them when her intellect was matured, she would have pronounced the same verdict as is recorded in *Jane Eyre*? To both these questions the answer is an emphatic affirmative. I base this answer upon an unpublished document which has lately been shown me, *Thoughts Suggested to the Superintendent and Ladies of the Clergy Daughters' School*, written long after *Jane Eyre*, and also upon certain published writings of Mr. Wilson which certainly could not have fallen into Charlotte's hands.

Mr. Wilson was a pious man, who wished to be a real benefactor to the young whom he gathered into the school at Cowan Bridge. Yet there is no sober Christian in these days who would not agree that methods more unsuitable than his could not well have been devised. He wrote many books for the young, which show very clearly what manner of man he was. *Youthful Memoirs*, published in 1828, is full of death-bed scenes of little children, all of whom speak an unnatural language, are precocious in prayer, and have a most unchildlike love of death—for instance, the boy of 3½ years, who, when asked whether he would choose death or life, replied, 'Death for me? I am fonder of death.' A local children's magazine called the *Children's Friend* (1826-1828), of which Mr. Wilson was the author rather than the editor, abounds in stories of sudden death and damnation. When these are not the themes, such subjects as the Horrors of the Plague or the Massacre of St. Bartholomew are chosen, and the terrible details—most unfit reading for little children—are even italicised. Another book is *First Tales*, being stories in words of one syllable for infants, published two years

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. W. Carus Wilson.



after *Jane Eyre*. Its suitability for little ones may be judged from the fact that in the very first page is a picture of a man being hanged, and the book opens: 'Look there! Do you see a man hung by the neck?' These children's books—most of them grotesquely illustrated—have all a local character, and were undoubtedly intended in the first place for the pupils at Cowan Bridge.

A glance through these little volumes proves that the portrait in *Jane Eyre* is exact. The very expressions put into the mouth of the 'black marble clergyman' may be found in them repeatedly. Let a few of the parallels serve. Mr. Brocklehurst says to Jane Eyre, 'Children younger than you die daily. I buried a little child five years old only a day or two since—a good little child, whose soul is now in Heaven.' *Youthful Memoirs* is full of the death-beds of these good little children. He says to Jane, 'You have a wicked heart, and you must pray God to change it: to give you a new and clean one: to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.' Almost the exact words occur in three of the stories; for example, Sarah Bickers says to a naughty companion that she 'must humble her pride and pray to God, and He would be sure to take away her heart of stone and give her a heart of flesh.' Mr. Brocklehurst says, 'I have a little boy younger than you who knows six psalms by heart.' There are a number of these little boys in *Youthful Memoirs* and the *Children's Friend*; one of them, aged eight, 'Knew many of the most important parts of God's Word, and got by heart many portions of it, which he often repeated in the night while lying awake.' Mr. Brocklehurst says to Jane's aunt, speaking of Lowood, 'Madam, she shall be placed in that nursery of chosen plants,' etc., and in the *Thoughts Suggested to the Superintendent and Ladies*, Mr. Wilson calls his school 'a nursery for Christ's Spiritual Church on Earth, and a nursery for Heaven.' Mr. Brocklehurst catechises Jane unpleasantly about the pit of fire and brimstone, and just such dialogues may be found in his books: these lines of his from the *Children's Friend* give succinctly the moral of many of his stories for children:

'Tis dangerous to provoke a God  
Whose power and vengeance none can tell;  
One stroke of His almighty rod  
Can send young sinners quick to hell.'

At the close of the interview with Jane, Mr. Brocklehurst gives her a tract, entitled 'The Child's Guide,' containing 'An account of the awfully sudden death of Martha G., a naughty child addicted to falsehood.' One of his little stories actually is entitled, 'An Awful History'; he did distribute just such tracts, for I have read one called 'The Burnt Bible,' of a most gruesome and bloodcurdling character; and he did not hesitate to terrify even the youngest children with these stories. In the *Children's Friend* he relates how a child, *three years of age*, 'had its naughty will crossed by its mother and flew into a violent passion. She screamed and cried and stamped, and, dreadful to relate, it pleased God to strike her dead. How awful her state!' He even repeats this story with amplification in his *Tales of one syllable for infants*: 'All at once God struck her dead, no time to pray, no time to call on God to save her soul. . . . Where is she now? We know that bad girls go to Hell.

She is in a rage with herself now.' Mr. Wilson really believed that a little dot, hardly old enough to walk, was doomed to eternal torments for getting into a pet. Charlotte's portrait of him is sober when placed beside the original.

It has been questioned whether the whipping scene in *Jane Eyre* represented a fact, and whether Mr. Carus Wilson could ever have advised the teachers 'to punish the body to save the soul.' But these books, both as regards illustrations and letterpress, seem, as one glances through, to bristle with canes and rods, and Mr. Wilson frequently insists on the necessity of corporal punishment. I quote one of his anecdotes because it seems to refer to some girl at Cowan Bridge. 'A poor little girl who had been taken into a school was whipped. She asked, "If they love us, why do they whip us?" A little girl of six replied, "It is because they love us, and it is to make us remember what a sad thing sin is. God would be angry with them if they did not whip us."'

No one, I am sure, could read Mr. Carus Wilson's *Thoughts Suggested to the Superintendent*, without being astonished at the accuracy with which Charlotte Brontë has represented in *Jane Eyre* his aims and religious ideas. The document—which is earnest in tone—takes us into the very atmosphere of Chapter vi. of *Jane Eyre*. Every one remembers the scene in which Mr. Brocklehurst orders the curls to be cut off, and declares it his mission 'to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh, and to teach them to clothe themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety.' In his *Thoughts*, written thirty-three years after Charlotte left Cowan Bridge, Mr. Wilson writes: 'The pupils are necessarily put into a very simple and uniform attire. Many of them no doubt feel it. They have been unfortunately accustomed, perhaps, even to excess in this very prevailing and increasing love of dress, for alas, clergymen's families are not exempt from the mania—not even the poorest. With me it was always an object to nip in the bud any growing symptom of vanity.' Mr. Brocklehurst everywhere insists that the pupils should be 'made useful and kept humble,' and Mr. Wilson, in his final manifesto, says that the teacher must discountenance 'trivial and useless work.' The children are to be 'brought up usefully, not tawdrily. . . . The tinsel and the varnish are of little moment compared with excellence in plain, useful work. . . . It will be a sorry look-out for a clergyman's daughter if she is sent out from the school, for instance, a first-rate performer in crochet and worsted work, and that sort of thing—however useful it may be—but unable to cut out and mend her own garments.'

Let me repeat, these extracts—which might be increased indefinitely—are not given for the purpose of reopening the question of Mr. Carus Wilson's character. It may be that most people nowadays will think that his lights were dim, and his methods mistaken, but there can be no doubt about his conscientiousness and good intentions. My purpose is only to show how marvellously accurate was the insight into character and the memory for words and incidents of Charlotte Brontë when she was a little girl of eight. We have here a phenomenon quite as unaccountable as that of the 'calculating boys' or the musical prodigies that from time to time have puzzled the world; and we see here one of the constituents of the genius which produced *Villette* and *Shirley*.

## APPENDIX IV

## THE REV. CARUS WILSON IN THE LAW COURTS

FROM THE 'LANCASTER GUARDIAN,' DECEMBER 1837

AN inquiry into certain charges made by the Rev. Carus Wilson of Casterton against the Board of Guardians in the Kendal Union has excited a great deal of conversation in the neighbourhood of Kirkby Lonsdale, where the Rev. gentleman resides. The charge against the Board of Guardians was one of wanton cruelty; and Mr. Wilson instanced the case of Mary Cornthwaite, a poor and aged woman, whom he charged them with having *starved to death*. The Poor Law Commissioners having received from Mr. Wilson a copy of his letter containing the charges in question immediately directed Mr. Voules, the Assistant Commissioner of the Westmoreland district, to institute an inquiry into the case.

Mr. Voules accordingly appointed Tuesday, the 24th ult., for the investigation, and wrote to Mr. Wilson to apprise him thereof, and challenging him to appear and support the charges he had made. Mr. Wilson appeared to be startled at this instruction, for he wrote to say that he never intended to appear publicly in support of his charge, that he expected his name would be concealed, and he thought he would be ill-used if he were thus dragged from his privacy; but he assured Mr. Voules, we understand, that he had the power to prove all that he had alleged, and he cautioned Mr. Voules *against the danger to which he was exposing the Kendal Guardians* by prosecuting the inquiry.

To this threat Mr. Voules made no other answer than that the inquiry would proceed; and that if he failed to appear, his absence would be construed into a tacit admission that his charges were unsupportable.

The inquiry took place accordingly on the day above named, and Mr. Wilson, accompanied by two magistrates of the neighbourhood, Christopher Wilson, Esq., of Rigmaden, and Welch, Esq., of Leck, made his appearance. The examination was chiefly confined to the case of Mary Cornthwaite, an old woman, who was burnt to death at Casterton. This was the person whom Mr. Wilson charged the Board of Guardians with having starved.

He came prepared with a host of witnesses, who were examined on oath by Mr. Voules, and from the evidence of these his own witnesses, it appeared that the woman had £4, 17s. in Kirkby Lonsdale Savings Bank; that this money stood there in the name of Mr. Wilson's mother until her death, when *he himself* changed it to the name of Mary Cornthwaite; that he himself is a director of the Bank; that after the death of



Mary Cornthwaite and *before* he wrote the letter complained of, he had either himself obtained or assisted in obtaining from the Bank the money in question for Mary Cornthwaite's relatives; that he himself called and presented the cheque (which was partially burnt) to Mr. Gregg, the manager of the Bank, and that he described the Mary Cornthwaite to the satisfaction of Mr. Gregg. It also appeared that this woman, whom Mr. Wilson alleged to have died of starvation, had in her house at the time of her death the greater part of a loaf of bread, about two ounces of butter, one-third of a pound of sugar, a quarter of a pound of tea, two black puddings, a piece of beef, and a piece of pork; that she had eight shillings and sixpence in silver in her pocket, which was found amongst the ashes on the floor, and she had a cart of coals just got in, that a respectable labouring man owed her sixteen or seventeen shillings, and that she had either lent or had owing to her by her neighbours other smaller sums. She had abundance of wearing apparel, bedding and bed-linen, of which an inventory was taken at the time of her death, and which was now given to the Assistant Commissioner. It was also proved that she had a clock, a chest of drawers, and a good bedstead and hangings, and other useful household furniture and utensils; and it was moreover proved, and we regret to state it, that all this was known to Mr. Wilson when he wrote the libel.

It was proved that she had applied for relief in order to find out her settlement, but had said that she had enough to live upon for a year, and then she must go to the Parish. She further declared to persons who gave evidence on the inquest that she had been seized with a fit of dizziness, and had fallen into the fire, and that when she came to her senses her clothes were burning.

A hint, it is said, was given after the inquest had concluded, that a rumour was abroad that she had been starved, on hearing which the Coroner (we believe, R. Wilson, Esq., of Kendal) gave directions to have the inventory taken, which afterwards turned out so useful. Mr. Carus Wilson's case having thus completely failed, the Rev. gentleman attempted to get rid of the case by a childish and contemptible shuffle. He said it might be a Mary Cornthwaite three hundred miles off that he alluded to. Mr. Voules checked this trifling by handing this Christian minister a Bible, and putting him on his oath. In answer to Mr. Voules' questions, he said he was the Rev. W. Carus Wilson, Vicar of Tunstall, the author of many religious works, and of the letter in question, etc., and he very reluctantly admitted the fact, that it was Mary Cornthwaite to whom he had referred. After much prevarication, he was at last compelled to admit the blackness of the charge, and to sue for mercy. This, however, was not a point for Mr. Voules to determine on, and Mr. Wilson having *retracted every part of his statement*, and affixed his signature to the retraction, the inquiry closed. The result of the examination was transmitted to London by Mr. Voules, and the case is before them for decision. Whether law proceedings will be instituted against Mr. Wilson for the libel, or whether the Commissioners will be satisfied with the publication of the apology and retraction, we have not heard. The latter appears to us the more likely.

At the conclusion of the inquiry, we understand, Mr. Welch expressed



himself in terms of strong disapprobation of Mr. Wilson's conduct, and warmly complimented Mr. Voules upon the impartial manner in which the inquiry had been conducted. Upon the general accuracy of the preceding statement we believe our readers may implicitly rely. We have contented ourselves with a plain and simple recital of the facts of the case as they have come to our knowledge, and if they are incorrect in any particular we shall gladly rectify them. We shall not trust ourselves at present to make a single word of comment of the conduct of the chief actor in this scene, the Rev. W. Carus Wilson. The injury to the cause of religion, and particularly to the established church, from such conduct cannot well be overrated.

## APPENDIX V

## THE EARLY BRONTË MANUSCRIPTS

THE following list includes the whole of the early Brontë Manuscripts known to me, or of which I can find any record :—

## UNPUBLISHED BRONTË LITERATURE

## BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

*The Young Men's Magazines.* In Six Numbers, . . . . 1829

[Only four out of these six numbers appear to have been preserved.]

*The Search after Happiness: A Tale.* By Charlotte Brontë, . . 1829

*Two Romantic Tales; viz. The Twelve Adventures, and An Adventure in Ireland,* . . . . 1829

*Natural History: A Magazine,* . . . . January 1829

*Characters of Great Men of the Present Age,* Dec. 17th, . . 1829

*Tales of the Islanders.* By Charlotte Brontë :—

Vol. i. dated June 31, 1829.

Vol. ii. dated December 2, 1829.

Vol. iii. dated May 8, 1830.

Vol. iv. dated July 30, 1830.

[Accompanying these volumes is a one-page document detailing 'The Origin of the Islanders.' Dated March 12, 1829.]

*Blackwood's Young Men's Magazine.* Edited by the Genius C. B.

Printed by Captain Tree, and sold by Captain Cory, . . 1829

*The Silver Cup: A Tale,* . . . . 1829

*An Interesting Story.* By Lord Charles Wellesley. Charlotte Brontë, . . . . 1830

*The Adventures of Mons. Edouard Clark.* By Lord C. Wellesley. Printed for Sergeant Tree, and sold by —, . . . . 1830

*The Adventures of Ernest Alembert: A Fairy Tale.* By Charlotte Brontë,<sup>1</sup> . . . . 1830

*Scenes on the Great Bridge.* By the Genius C. B., . . . . 1830

*The Poetaster: A Drama.* In two volumes. By Lord Charles Wellesley. Volume the First, . . . . July 3rd, 1830

*The Evening Walk: A Poem.* By the Marquis Douro, . . . . 1830

<sup>1</sup> *Ernest Alembert* was printed in *Literary Anecdotes*, by Thomas J. Wise and Dr. Robertson Nicoll, and reprinted for private circulation by Mr. Wise in the Ashley Library.

- A Translation into English Verse of the First Book of Voltaire's Henriade.* By Charlotte Brontë, . . . . . 1830
- Albion and Marina: A Tale.* By Lord Wellesley, . . . . . 1830
- The Violet: A Poem.* With several smaller Pieces. By the Marquis of Douro. Published by Sergeant Tree. Glass-town, 1830, . . . . . 1830
- The Bridal.* By C. Brontë, . . . . . 1832
- Arthuriana; or, Odds and Ends: Being a Miscellaneous Collection of Pieces in Prose and Verse.* By Lord Charles A. F. Wellesley, . . . . . 1833
- Something about Arthur.* Written by Charles Albert Florian Wellesley, . . . . . 1833
- The Vision.* By Charlotte Brontë, . . . . . 1833
- The Secret and Lily Hart: Two Tales.* By Lord Charles Wellesley, . . . . . 1833

[The first page of this book is given in facsimile in vol. i. of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*.]

- Visits in Verdopolis.* By the Honourable Charles Albert Florian Wellesley. Two vols., . . . . . 1833
- The Green Dwarf: A Tale of the Perfect Tense.* By Lord Charles Albert Florian Wellesley. Charlotte Brontë, . . . . . 1833
- The Foundling: A Tale of our own Times.* By Captain Tree, . . . . . 1833
- Richard Cœur de Lion and Blondel.* By Charlotte Brontë. 8vo, pp. 20. Signed in full *Charlotte Brontë*, and dated Haworth, near Bradford, Dec. 27th, 1833, . . . . . 1833
- My Angria and the Angrians.* By Lord Charles Albert Florian Wellesley, . . . . . 1834
- A Leaf from an Unopened Volume; or, The Manuscript of an Unfortunate Author.* Edited by Lord Charles Albert Florian Wellesley, . . . . . 1834
- Corner Dishes; Being a small Collection of . . . Trifles in Prose and Verse.* By Lord Charles Albert Florian Wellesley, . . . . . 1834
- The Spell: An Extravaganza.* By Lord Charles Albert Florian Wellesley. Signed *Charlotte Brontë*, June 21st, 1834. The contents include: 1. Preface, half page; 2. The Spell, 26 pages; 3. High Life in Verdopolis: or The Difficulties of Annexing a Suitable Title to a Work Practically Illustrated in Six Chapters. By Lord C. A. F. Wellesley, March 20, 1834, 22 pages; 4. The Scrap-Book: A Mingling of Many Things. Compiled by Lord C. A. F. Wellesley. *C. Brontë*, March 17th, 1835, 31 pages.

[This volume is in the British Museum.]

- Death of Darius Cadomanus: A Poem.* By Charlotte Brontë. Pp. 24. Signed in full, and dated, . . . . . 1835
- Saul and Memory: Two Poems.* By C. Brontë. Pp. 12, . . . . . 1835
- Passing Events,* . . . . . 1836
- 'We Wove a Web in Childhood': A poem (pp. vi.), signed C. Brontë, Haworth, Dec'r. 19th, 1835, . . . . . 1835*

- The Wounded Stag, and other Poems.* Signed *C. Brontë*. Jan'y.  
19, 1836. Pp. 20, . . . . . 1836  
*Poems.* 50 pages, . . . . . 1836-37  
*Lord Douro: A Story.* Signed *C. Brontë*. July 21st, 1837, . . . 1837  
*Poems.* By *C. Brontë*. Pp. 16, . . . . . 1838  
*Caroline Vernon: A Story.* In three Books. Signed *Charles*  
*Townsend*, . . . . . 1839  
*A Story.* (Without Title.) Signed *C. Townsend*, . . . . . 1839  
*Lettre d'Invitation à un Ecclesiastique.* Signed *Charlotte Brontë*.  
Le 21 Juillet, 1842. Large 8vo, pp. 4. A French exercise  
written at Brussels, . . . . . 1842  
*The Moores.* By *Charlotte Brontë*. Crown 8vo, pp. 36, written  
in pencil, . . . . . circa 1852  
Reprinted in *Dr. Robertson Nicoll's* edition of *Jane Eyre*.  
*Willie Ellin.* By *Charlotte Brontë*. Crown 8vo, pp. 18,  
May and June 1853

Reprinted in *The Woman at Home* for December 1898.

The following, included in *Charlotte's* 'Catalogue of my Books,' printed by *Mrs. Gaskell*, are not now forthcoming:

- Leisure Hours: A Tale, and two Fragments* . . . July 6th, 1829  
*An Interesting Incident in the Lives of some of the most eminent*  
*Persons of the Age: A Tale,* . . . . . June 10th, 1830  
*A Book of Rhymes.* Finished, . . . . . December 17th, 1829  
*Miscellaneous Poems.* Finished, . . . . . May 3rd, 1830<sup>1</sup>

[These *Miscellaneous Poems* are probably poems written upon separate sheets, and not forming a complete book—indeed, some half-dozen such separate poems are still extant. The last item given in *Charlotte's* list of these *Miscellaneous Poems* is *The Evening Walk*, 1820; this is a separate book, and is included in the list above.]

### BY EMILY BRONTË

- A volume of *Poems*, 8vo, pp. 29; signed (at the top of the first page) *E. J. B.* Transcribed February 1844. Each poem is headed with the date of its composition. Of the poems included in this book four are still unprinted, the remainder were published in the *Poems* of 1846. The whole are written in microscopic characters, . . . . . 1844  
A volume of *Poems*, square 8vo, pp. 24. Each poem is dated, and the first is signed *E. J. Brontë*, August 19th, 1837. Written in an ordinary, and not a minute, handwriting. All unpublished, . . . . . 1837-1839  
A series of poems written in a minute hand upon both sides of fourteen or fifteen small slips of paper of various sizes. All unpublished, . . . . . 1833-1839

<sup>1</sup> 'The Poems of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë' in these lists were sold to America, and privately printed by Dodd, Mead and Company of New York in 1902 under that title—110 copies only. Those of Emily were reprinted in *Collected Poems*, 1908 (Hodder and Stoughton).



- Lettre and Réponse.* An exercise in French. Large 8vo, pp. 4.  
Signed *E. J. Brontë*, and dated 16 Juillet, . . . 1842
- L'Amour Filial.* An exercise in French. Small quarto, pp. 4.  
Signed in full *Emily J. Brontë*, and dated 5 Août, . . . 1842

## BY ANNE BRONTË

- Verses by Lady Geraldine*, and other poems. A crown 8vo volume of 28 pages. Each poem is signed (or initialled) and dated, the dates extending from 1836 to 1837. The poems are all unpublished, . . . 1836-1837
- The North Wind*, and other poems. A crown 8vo volume of 26 pages. Each poem is signed (or initialled) and dated, some having in addition to her own name the nom-de-guerre *Alexandrina Zenobia* or *Olivia Vernon*. The dates extend from 1838 to 1840. The poems are all unpublished, . . . 1838-1840
- To Cowper*, and other poems. 8vo, pp. 22. Of the nine poems contained in this volume three are signed *Anne Brontë*, four are signed *A. Brontë*, and two are initialled '*A. B.*' All are dated. Part of these Poems are unpublished, the remainder appeared in the *Poems* of 1846, . . . 1842-1845
- A thin 8vo volume of poems (mostly dated 1845), pp. 14, each being signed *A. Brontë*, or simply '*A. B.*'—some having in addition to, or instead of, her own name the nom-de-guerre *Zerona*. A few of these poems are unprinted; the remainder are a portion of Anne's contribution to the *Poems* of 1846, . . . circa 1845
- Song*: '*Should Life's first feelings be forgot*' (one octavo leaf), . . . 1845

[A fair copy (2 pp. 8vo) of a poem by Branwell Brontë, in the handwriting of Anne Brontë.]

- The Power of Love*, and other poems. Post octavo, pp. 26. Each poem is signed (or initialled) and dated, . . . 1845-1846
- Self-Communion*, a Poem. 8vo, pp. 19. Signed '*A. B.*,' and dated April 17th, 1848, . . . 1848

## BY BRANWELL BRONTË

- The Battle of Washington.* By P. B. Brontë. With full-page coloured illustrations, . . . 1827

[An exceedingly childish production, and the earliest of all the Brontë manuscripts.]

- History of the Rebellion in my Army*, . . . 1828
- The Travels of Rolando Segur: Comprising his Adventures throughout the Voyage, and in America, Europe, the South Pole, etc.*  
By Patrick Branwell Brontë. In two volumes, . . . 1829
- Branwell's Blackwood's Magazine.* Two volumes Glasstown, July 1829

- A Collection of Poems.* By Young Soult the Rhymers. Illustrated with Notes and Commentaries by Monsieur Chateaubriand. In two volumes, . . . . . 1829
- The Liar Detected.* By Captain Bud, . . . . . 1830
- Caractacus: A Dramatic Poem.* By Young Soult, . . . . . 1830
- The Revenge: A Tragedy, in three Acts.* By Young Soult. P. B. Brontë. In two volumes. Glasstown, . . . . . 1830

[Although the title-page reads 'in two volumes,' the book is complete in one volume only.]

- The History of the Young Men.* By John Bud, . . . . . 1831
- Letters from an Englishman.* By Captain John Flower. In six volumes, . . . . . 1830-1832
- The Monthly Intelligencer.* No. 1, . . . . . March 27, 1833

[The only number produced of a projected manuscript newspaper, by Branwell Brontë. The MS. consists of 4 pp. 4to, arranged in columns, precisely after the manner of an ordinary journal.]

- Real Life in Verdopolis: A Tale.* By Captain John Flower, M.P. In two volumes. P. B. Brontë, . . . . . 1833
- The Politics of Verdopolis: A Tale.* By Captain John Flower. P. B. Brontë, . . . . . 1833
- The Pirate: A Tale.* By Captain John Flower, . . . . . 1833

[The most pretentious of Branwell's prose stories.]

- Thermopylae: A Poem.* By P. B. Brontë. 8vo, pp. 14, . . . . . 1834
- And the Weary are at Rest: A Tale.* By P. B. Brontë, . . . . . 1834
- The Wool is Rising: An Angrian Adventure.* By the Right Honourable John Baron Flower, . . . . . 1834
- Ode to the Polar Star, and other Poems.* By P. B. Brontë. Quarto, pp. 24, . . . . . 1834
- The Life of Field-Marshal the Right Honourable Alexander Percy, Earl of Northangerland.* In two volumes. By John Bud. P. B. Brontë, . . . . . 1835
- The Rising of the Angrians: A Tale.* By P. B. Brontë, . . . . . 1836
- A Narrative of the First War.* By P. B. Brontë, . . . . . 1836
- The Angrian Welcome: A Tale.* By P. B. Brontë . . . . . 1836
- Percy: A Story.* By P. B. Brontë, . . . . . 1837
- A packet containing four small groups of *Poems*, of about six or eight pages each, mostly without titles, but all either signed or initialled, and dated from 1836 to 1838.
- Love and Warfare: A Story.* By P. B. Brontë, . . . . . 1839
- Lord Nelson, and other Poems.* By P. B. Brontë. Written in pencil. Small 8vo, pp. 26, . . . . . 1844

[This book contains a full-page pencil portrait of Branwell Brontë, drawn by himself, as well as four carefully finished heads. These give an excellent idea of the extent of Branwell's artistic skill.]

## APPENDIX VI

## PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

BY JOHN STORES SMITH IN THE 'FREE LANCE' OF MARCH 7, 1868<sup>1</sup>

IN the year eighteen hundred and fifty, literature had not yet become the multitudinous entanglement it has now grown into. Mudie was little known in the Metropolis and not at all in the provinces. There were no Smith's stalls at the railway stations. The only shilling magazine was the now defunct Tait's; and an assiduous reader could keep up with all the periodical and book literature of the day; and, as it seems to me, there was a different spirit in the readers. The reading youth of the country regarded literature with enthusiasm and passion. They looked forward to forthcoming works of their favourite authors with an intense eagerness, and gave themselves infinite trouble to get early possession of them, and devoured them with ecstasy, and would have walked miles to catch even a passing glimpse of their authors. The vapid, 'used-up' tone that characterises the young men of to-day did not exist. Our provincial streets did not swarm with languid Lord Dundrearys in their teens. To have written a book was then a distinction; and it was a passport of admittance to whatever of thought and culture our northern towns professed. Those who were indifferent to literature simply didn't read at all, and were thought no worse for it. But nearly every town contained its distinct reading set, who were looked down upon as muffs, or up to with respect, as the looker up or down was a man of sense or an ass. Such a small coterie of enthusiastic admirers of literature existed then in a little Yorkshire town which I will designate Horton. They were its intellectual salt. For the mass of the people were so utterly given to money-making—hard, narrow, grasping, grinding money-making—to adoration of the stomach—to ignorant snobbery among the older families, and brutal, rude ignorance among the poorer classes—that the place had no apparent *raison d'être* in any intelligible theory of the universe, had it not been for this little knot of thoughtful and earnest-minded young men. In all that appertains to the noblest and highest in man, they were the best, the true aristocracy of the place; and those that thought themselves the best would not have had one of them within their doors. The bulk of the middle-classes were sheer, hard money-grubbers through the day, and the majority fuddled away a modicum of the day's winnings at the various inn-bars at night; and the rest were dismal, unlettered bigots of the most narrow section of Edward Bainesism.

<sup>1</sup> John Stores Smith wrote *Mirabeau: A Life History*, 1848; *Social Aspects*, 1852; *A Treatise on the Principles of Equity*, 1856; *Men of the Scottish Reformation*, 1860; *Practice of the Court of Chancery*, 1862.

But this small clique held its own, and, while following their respective occupations in life successfully, avoided the gin of the public-house on the one hand, and the bitters of Bainesitis on the other. One or two were scientific in their tastes, some musical, but all were literary. Among the number was the present Dean of University College and Dr. John Tyndall, famous over the wide, wide world. There was a solicitor who would sit a long evening without talking, but who would crack you a German nut that would puzzle many a German himself—to whom Jean Paul Richter was easy, and who, if questions were made of a poem of Goethe's, or a ballad of Schiller's, would slip an elegant translation of it into your hands when next you met him. There was a bookkeeper in a manufacturer's office who knew all the flora and fauna of the West Riding—who walked miles in the morning or on Sundays for a rare specimen, and who came to these little reunions to superadd somewhat of poetry, criticism, art, and science. The most many-sided and brilliant of the circle was a gentleman actively engaged in trade, but who had found leisure to acquire three modern languages and to read music critically at sight. Well, it so chanced that circumstances made me an inhabitant of this town for the better part of the year 1850; and as my tastes and pursuits were similar to those of this coterie, I soon found my way into their society, and as, in addition, I had previously published a work which had excited some little attention and been most gloriously abused, I was received with open hands and hearts more open. We met every Saturday evening at the rooms of the present dean, and when I joined them, I found the chief topic of absorbing interest, the temporary subject of their hero-worship was Charlotte Brontë.

Her *Jane Eyre* had appeared in 1848, issuing from the same publisher's press at precisely the same time as my own fiasco. How that extraordinary work took the public by storm; how the press and public were unanimous that an original genius, of a most delicate and remarkable organisation, with the subtle powers of observation and an almost weird gift of analysis, had flashed upon the world, is a matter of the literary history of the age. It is not so much a matter of remembered history how great and tantalising a mystery surrounded its authorship. The critics could not even decide whether the writer were man or woman. Some maintained the one and some the other, but for nearly two years not a corner of the curtain that veiled the writer had been lifted. *Shirley* had followed, and the world knew the author only by the ambiguous pseudonym of 'Currer Bell.' None had read these works with greater relish, or taken a deeper interest in the discovery of their author than our little Horton circle; and just before I made their acquaintance, a rumour, treated first of all as absurd, had gradually grown probable, and it was then as near a matter of certainty as any unavowed fact can be, that these magic pictures were from the pen of a lady, living only nine miles off across the moors, and whose very brother had only recently ceased to be a station-master in the very immediate neighbourhood.

This being the state of affairs as regards Currer Bell, it was one evening decided, in full conclave of our little society, that as fate had seemed somehow to connect me with the author by sending us both



upon the world of books in the same year, and from the same press, and in now bringing me to her very threshold so to speak, it might not be unbecoming to help fate a little, and bring myself into personal relationship to her. It was resolved that I might, without any impertinence, nay, with a loyal frankness that could not be other than agreeable to her, forward a presentation copy of my work, with a note expressive of my own and my friends' admiration for the productions of our wondrous neighbour. With that glowing oblivion of conventionality which glorifies youth, I followed this course, and on our next Saturday evening I was able to exhibit the following acknowledgment :—

*March 6th, 1850.*

DEAR SIR,—I have to thank you very sincerely for your kind note and the volumes accompanying it. Through the kindness of my publishers, I had already enjoyed the opportunity of reading '—,' but it is an additional pleasure to possess the work as a gift from the author.

I am happy to learn that my writings have afforded you some agreeable moments, and if my gratification is a little chastened by the fear that you ascribe to me a merit beyond my deserts, perhaps it is better so; the unmixed cup is rarely salutary.

With every good wish for your success in the honourable but difficult career of literature,—I am, my dear sir, yours sincerely,

CURRER BELL.

For Currer Bell to acknowledge by return of post the receipt of a letter addressed to Miss Brontë placed their identity beyond a doubt; and many Sundays had not elapsed before two of our party were seized with an ardent desire to attend Divine Service at the Parish Church, Haworth. I was not one of the two. Rising betimes they crossed the moors, and reached the place in time for morning service, and when it was over they left the church, and, ostensibly studying epitaphs, placed themselves in such a position as to command a sight of any one coming from the church to the parsonage. They were gratified by the vision of a lady, who perfectly realised their preconceived idea of Currer Bell, and who it subsequently was made manifest was *not* Miss Brontë. But we were not the less deeply interested with their graphic account of the place and the personal appearance of our supposed authoress.

It was somewhere about this time that Miss Brontë visited London and appeared in various circles of society, as the avowed writer of *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*; and, as in that visit she made the acquaintance of several friends of my own, I had no scruple in forwarding her a copy of a second work of mine, which appeared in July. In a day or two the following letter came to hand :—

HAWORTH, *July 25th, 1850.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have not yet read the whole of the work you have kindly sent me, but I have read enough of it to feel impatient to offer my sincere congratulations on the marked—the important progress made by the author since the publication of his '—.' I find '—' deeply interesting, as all must find it who accord the book an attentive perusal. It seems to me that the views here expressed have a peculiar rectitude, that the thoughts are full of sound sense, and that these views are advocated,

and these thoughts advanced with an earnestness that deserves, and, I trust, will command general attention.

In writing this book you have cast good seed into the ground; that you may see it ripen and gather the produce a hundredfold, is the sincere wish of—Yours very truly,  
C. BRONTË.

*P.S.*—You mention Mrs. Gaskell and Miss Jewsbury. I regard as an honour any expression of interest from these ladies. The latter I had once the pleasure of meeting in London.

Still, Currer Bell was only a shadow to me, and often during my rambles over the hills and moorlands around Horton, my eye would wander over the tumbled billows, and wavy stretches of heather, to certain crests and eminences, whose grey old tops I knew well looked down upon the lonely hamlet wherein this bright daughter of the empyrean had her mortal dwelling; and a desire would steal over me to extend my walk an hour or two and pay a passing call. At length it chanced that to find my way from a certain place I had to visit, to journey through Keighley, and Haworth would be what the country-folk call my 'gainest' road to Horton. I therefore dropped a short note to Miss Brontë, saying that, if quite agreeable to her, I would do myself the honour of calling upon her on such and such a day; and having received a very kind reply, saying she would be glad to see me and inviting me to dinner, I found myself at Keighley Station on a lovely morning in September, and I was, I believe, the first person out of her own immediate circle of relatives and friends who spent a day with Charlotte Brontë in her own home, now familiar by pen and pencil to every one to whom genius is admirable and the tragedies of domestic life are sacred.

## PERSONAL REMINISCENCES—*Continued*

### A DAY WITH CHARLOTTE BRONTË

THE village of Haworth, its weather-beaten church, and lonely and desolate parsonage, have been painted in words so very frequently and, at times, so very well, since the lamented death of her who alone rendered that obscure hamlet worth a passing word, as to render it almost supererogatory for me to add another to that multitude of descriptions. And yet any attempt to give a full and vivid conception of Charlotte Brontë would altogether fail if quite stripped of due local colouring. For the material aspects of Haworth—the quiet desolation of its mouldy struggle to the unbroken solitudes of the boundless moors, are the background upon which, and upon which only, can Miss Brontë's portrait be portrayed. Haworth was a part of her innermost nature; it was the ground melody that ran through her every book, and laid the basis of her idiosyncrasy. Had the Brontë family lived in any other village in England, there might have been a Charlotte Brontë, but assuredly there would have been no Currer Bell. It was the visible, material Haworth, and its surrounding belt of trackless and unpopulated moorland, that made poets of the young Brontës—poets none the less because their inspiration did not have a rhythmic utterance—that gave the strange, almost unearthly tone to their

intellectual characteristics. Haworth called their genius into being—moulded it into ripened originality, and then slew them. It was at once the creator of Currer Bell and her assassin. Therefore a few descriptive touches are essential to any attempted photograph of that lady. Moreover, I am conscious to this moment how thoroughly the spirit of the place weighed upon my own mind and nature, and coloured my first impressions of Miss Brontë, and has entwined itself around her in my memory inseparable for ever. Inquiring my way in the town of Keighley, I was told that the village of Haworth lay some three miles off, on the road to Bradford and Halifax; accordingly I set my face southward, with a brisk foot and a light heart. After walking a good half-hour, I perceived the long line of a single street which, leaving the main road abruptly, climbed steeply to the western hills for about a mile, and then terminated sharply and at once with the grey-green tower of a church. This place seemed so directly out of the way to Bradford, that I paid little attention to it, and never dreamed that it could be the temporary ending of my walk. But when I reached the point of bifurcation, and saw the southern road stretching over the uplands rather to the eastward, without a trace of any village on its course, I made inquiries, and then found that this street-village was the Haworth I was in search of. It lay there like a speculation given up in despair, as one comes across, in lonely places, up and down, a half-sunk coal shaft, with an abandoned pump atop, or a scraped hillside giving evidence of an abandoned stone delph, both telling their own sad tale of fruitless hope, and bootless expenditure, and ruined fortunes; so did this single-street Haworth give you the idea, that, in some impulsive intoxication of the past, vigorous spirits had determined to run one long Oxford Street of houses over the moors to Colne, and having lost heart and energy by the way, had flung the attempt up in despair, and with a last expiring effort had erected a church to administer consolation to the baffled and dispirited projectors. What Haworth may be now I do not know. The vast extension of the woollen trade may have galvanised even it into the semblance of prosperous and vigorous life. But in 1850 it was the most dead-alive, melancholy-looking place it has ever been my lot to see. No sign of life, or trade, or traffic, was perceptible. The very houses seemed miserable, and if stones could look positively heartless, they did. Divested of all the beauty and Oriental colouring, it was a very Lotus land; a place where, let the sun shine never so brightly—and most gloriously it did that day—‘it seemed always afternoon.’ By the time I had reached the end of its steep hill, my body was wearied, and my high spirits had all given way to an oppressive numbness of soul. How any one could live a lifetime there, and not grow morbid, was incomprehensible; and now I could read the secret of Patrick Brontë’s life, some details of which had even reached me, long ere Mrs. Gaskell laid them so inaccurately bare to the public gaze. But when I had traversed the damp and depressing churchyard—a flagged congregation of the dead, which seemed to combine all the dismal ugliness of a city graveyard with the savage isolation of the wilds—and stood in front of the parsonage, all the inner mysteries of *Wuthering Heights* and *Wildfell Hall*, and the gnome-like genius and premature deaths of Ellis and Acton Bell, were clear to me. The parsonage was a



low stone house which occupied one corner of the graveyard. A field had evidently been set apart, and the founders of the church had said, 'In three-fourths of it we will inter the dead, and in that other fourth we will bury the living.' A little garden was before it, and you stepped straight off the gravestones into it. You also went down one step, as toward a larger grave. A flagged walk led up to the front door, and it was covered over with a damp, green film, and in the interstices grew an almost black moss. The garden on either side was filled with various common country plants and shrubs, but bore no trace of any care of attention, and the exuberant vegetation of autumn's excess hid their nature, and gave me the phantom-like feeling that I was looking upon the colony of the fabled Mandrake. The stone of the house was of the same melancholy tint as the flags of the walk; a small door was in the centre, and a window on either side; in the only storey about were three windows, I think. Of all the sad, heart-broken-looking dwellings I had passed through, this looked the saddest. A great sinking of spirit came over me, and I wished I had not come. I felt that my face, could I have seen it, had instinctively put on that expression one endeavours to wear when attending a funeral; I also felt that I was out of keeping with the atmosphere of the place. What was I doing taking the hot blood and rollicking high spirits of one-and-twenty into the sombre, silent catacomb? I stood at the gate irresolute, half thinking I would sneak away and not pay my promised visit, when a ludicrous and rather grotesque incident decided for me otherwise.

In those days I possessed a dog, which had become a loved companion of my rambles. He was a young creature, having just attained the age that, according to the laws of dog-hood, might be considered his majority. I never rightly knew his breed, but his descent was Scotch. He was covered with long, thick, wiry drab hair, was of great length and little height. He commenced with a black nose and shaggy face, as shrewd-looking as that of a U.P. elder, and a pair of bandy legs; and then went on for such a length that it seemed as though nature had purposed to extend him indefinitely, but, getting tired, had clapped on a tail by way of writing 'to be continued,' and so left him. This dog arrived at the garden wicket simultaneously with myself. Now it so chanced that the dog of the parsonage was taking his siesta in the sun at the very moment, and lay curled into a huge ball on the doorstep. He was very old, and almost toothless, and I believe wholly blind. His breed was conglomerate, combining every species of English caninity from the turnspit to the sheep-dog, with a strain of Haworth originality superadded. This had been the companion of Emily Brontë in her long stroll across the hills, when she wandered afar, with brain seething with weird imaginings; and later, when she sought the congenial melancholy of the moors with weakening footsteps, and heart and brain gradually fading before the fatal advance of the English Atropos—consumption. In the exuberance of his youth, with tail wagging and ears cocked, my dog trotted gaily up to this poor old memento of the past, and in a second there was such an uproar as Haworth churchyard had seldom or never heard. With an angry roar, the old dog, by sheer weight, rolled the younger one over and commenced a painless worrying with his toothless gums; and the other, smarting



under the first rebuff he had yet encountered, howled for vexation rather than pain. In a minute or less I had nipped up my animal, and held him under my arm, barking furiously, while the old one rolled to and fro among the mandrakes, blindly seeking his vanished enemy. At this instant the door opened and the servant appeared, and behind her on the stairs the authoress of *Jane Eyre*. Here was a romantic meeting. An enthusiastic genius-lover and hero-worshipper, with a heart aflame towards literature, and all its priests and sybils, literally blazing with earnestness, makes a pilgrimage to the most original lady of the age, and he meets her thus; with a barking terrier under his arm, and a growling old conglomerate mumbling at his calves. To this hour I have only a confused recollection of the servant taking my dog from me, saying that she would fasten him up in the stable; of a slender lady, more like a spirit than a corporal being, bidding me welcome with a quiet, amused smile on her lips; of her telling me that she had half-an-hour's writing that must be done ere dinner, and, having asked me to be so good as to pass that interval with her father, of her opening a door to the right and showing me into a small room, with the words—'Father, this is Mr. —, whom I have told you about,' closing the door behind me, and leaving me flustered and confused in the presence of a blind old man.<sup>1</sup> Had I never seen more of Miss Brontë, I should have had no impression of her left on my mind.

The Reverend Mr. Brontë was the ruin of what had been a striking and singularly handsome man. He was tall, strongly built, and even then perfectly erect. His hair was nearly white, but his eyebrows were still black; his features were large and handsome, but he was quite blind. He was dressed very carelessly, in almost worn-out clothes, had no proper necktie, and was in slippers. He sat beside the fireplace erect in his chair, facing the window, and he seemed to look steadfastly towards the light with his sightless orbs, which were never again to behold it, until the celestial splendour of the New Jerusalem flash upon them, when the sun and moon shall be no more. The blind old dog curled himself on the hearth at his blind old master's feet. He commenced conversation almost immediately upon his daughter. I had read and admired her works? I told him I had, and gave my honest opinion of their fascinating interest and startling originality. And was that the general verdict of the world? I gave him a summary of many criticisms I well remembered, and at every pause he rubbed his knees slowly, and muttered in half soliloquy: 'And I hadn't an idea of it. To think of me never even suspecting it. Strange! Strange!' And then he talked about Emily and the other sister, and told me how he had considered Emily the genius of the family, how he never fancied Charlotte capable of writing anything, and could scarcely realise it, and as he did so, he ever and anon fell into reverie again, and muttered the old refrain: 'And I knew nothing about it, positively nothing. Strange! Strange! Perhaps I might have stopped it if I had. But I knew nothing—nothing.' He seemed to have a three-fold feeling—regret that novels should have proceeded from his daughters; paternal pride, evident and sometimes garrulous, demonstrative pride;

<sup>1</sup> We know from Charlotte Brontë's letters that her father was not blind at this time.

and a wandering inability altogether to believe it. After a little he turned upon the untimely deaths of his younger children; dwelt much upon both, and then fell into soliloquy once more: 'And she is dead! And Emily dead too! both dead! All dead!'

'While he was talking thus, the lonely place,  
The Old Man's shape and speech all troubled me.'

How could I talk to him? What were my inflated schemes and random day-dreams, what was the weather, or trade, or politics, to this blind old ruin sitting there, confused amid the splendour of his child's success, and mourning on the sad hearth-stone of a bereaved fireside? I could not talk. I could only sit subdued and depressed, as I might have kept watch beside a corpse. For the first time in my life, I had practical experience that even in the comet-like track of genius, all is not brilliance. Here was the most original living Englishwoman, who had broken out into the full glory of an achieved success, whose pen was wealth to her, whose name was on every cultivated tongue, and whose creations were in every cultivated mind, and this—this was her home! I was so musing, when, after the lapse of about an hour, the door opened and the servant announced dinner.

I was shown across the lobby into the parlour to the left, and there I found Miss Brontë standing in full light of the window, and I had ample opportunity of fixing her upon my memory, where her image is visibly present to this hour. She was diminutive in height and extremely fragile in figure. Her hand was one of the smallest I ever grasped. She had no pretensions of being considered beautiful, and yet was far removed from being plain. She had rather light brown hair, somewhat thin and drawn plainly over her brow. Her complexion had no trace of colour in it, and her lips were pallid also; but she had a sweet smile, with a touch of tender melancholy in it. Altogether she was as unpretending, undemonstrative, quiet a little lady as you could meet. Her age I took to be about five-and-thirty. But when you saw and felt her eyes, the spirit that created *Jane Eyre* was revealed to you at once. They were rather small, but of a very peculiar colour, and had a strange lustre and intensity. They were chameleon-like, a blending of brown and various olive tints. But they looked you through and through, and you felt they were forming an opinion of you, not by mere acute noting of Lavaterish physiognomical peculiarities, but by a subtle penetration into the very marrow of your mind and the innermost core of your soul. Taking my hand, again she apologised for her enforced absence, and as she did so, she looked right through me. There was no boldness in the gaze, but an intense, direct, searching look, as of one who had the gift to read hidden mysteries, and the right to read them. I had a feeling that I never experienced before or since, as though I was being mesmerised. It was almost a relief when the look was removed, and we sat down together to table. During dinner I had always a feeling that those eyes were upon me, when I was looking down myself, and when I looked at her, and her gaze was on her plate, I still could not divest myself of the sensation that those eyes could see through their lids. We did not converse much while the simple meal was being despatched, but afterwards we had a ceaseless talk extending over

fully two hours. I have not one single phrase of her conversation to chronicle. There was neither wit, nor fancy, nor brilliance in her remarks. Her talk was remarkable for strong, shrewd, homely sense, tersely, briefly, directly, and vigorously expressed. There was not a trace of the literary woman about her; no attempt at effect, no *tours de phrase*. The merit of her remarks lay altogether in the matter, and not the least in the manner. About herself, and sisters, and family generally, she was reticent, and seemed to put the subject markedly away from her. She confined her observations to myself, my designs and prospects, and to the expression of her views of London literary men and their lives and characters.

As regards myself, she at once assumed an almost maternal tone. I was then about to perpetrate one of those colossal follies which only the fervour of youth renders possible; which we lament for many years, and then, later in life, envy the heart that was capable of such courageous, hopeful recklessness. I was about to abandon reliable commerce, and go up to London and take my chance in the intricate jungle of literature. She did not directly endeavour to dissuade me. I fancy those mesmeric eyes had told her that that would be as useless a task as to attempt to make Haworth lively. But she did point out that if I continued to write such matter as, she was complimentary enough to say, was alone worthy of me, I must starve, and she seemed to think the tamest Haworth life was preferable to the turning of the pen into a literary tight-rope dancing-machine for gold. But she sought to turn me away from London by an indirect method. Whether she exaggerated her real sentiments for my benefit, or whether she afterwards in any way modified her views, I do not know, but certainly in 1850, shortly after her visit to London as a literary lioness, she pictured her impressions of metropolitan literary life in most forbidding colours, and with clear, cutting, intense distaste of it; I may even say contempt. Dickens she had met,<sup>1</sup> and admired his genius, but did not like him. Her homely thrift and unpretending, retiring nature shrunk from him, from an idea she had acquired of ostentatious extravagance on his part. Thackeray she absolutely worshipped. Carlyle she knew little of, but revered the dignity of his life, though she disliked his writings. Of one eminent man in criticism, and metaphysical and scientific literature, she had an absolute loathing; and of the ruck and run of the minor Guerillas and Bohemians of Letters she spoke with a supreme contempt. She had looked literary life full in the face, and was contented to die in Haworth, rather than to live in that. Throughout all this she evinced an almost tender interest in myself. Here is an ingenuous youth, with the sails of his fresh manhood full set, and the colours of an exalted imagination flying, bearing straight down upon Charybdis; I will strain my graphic power to show him clearly that it is to Charybdis he is going. I remember well her last words. They were: 'When you get to London, seek out and gain the friendship of Mr. Thackeray; maintain that of Mr. Carlyle; but as for the general body who call themselves literary men, avoid them as a moral pestilence.'

By this time it was five o'clock, and I took my leave. I left by the back way, and so got my dog off without another fracas. I strode away

<sup>1</sup> This is an error. Charlotte Brontë never met Charles Dickens.



through the long street of Haworth, and mounted the eastward hills; and it was not until the fresh breezes of the moors were blowing over me, that I felt the sense of despondent depression in any way lightened. As it was, I turned round and bade adieu to the receding church and parsonage with feelings of pain and sorrow. I was sorry for the solitary lady I had left behind. I never dreamed that she would have married, but I felt that she must die. I was sorry for myself. I felt that I had met a Cassandra, and though my will was determined not to heed her, the still small voice within me said that her vaticinations were correct, and that I was on my way to disaster. Both feelings were correct. I encountered shipwreck, and Miss Brontë died.

So ended my day with Charlotte Brontë. A more unrelieved, oppressive story than hers and her sisters I do not recollect. Their brief existence was one overclouding nightmare, and the hand that touched them and dispelled it was the hand of death.

## APPENDIX VII

THESE letters were received after the volumes had gone to press. The editor will be obliged if any of his readers will send him other letters by Charlotte Brontë for incorporation in later editions.

### Letter I

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

*January, 1840.*

MY DEAR ELLEN,—I write a hasty line to assure you we shall be happy to see you on the day you mention, Friday week. I will do my best to give you what assistance I can while you stay with us, and as you are now acquainted with the neighbourhood and its total want of society, and with our plain, monotonous mode of life, I do not fear so much as I used to do that you will be disappointed with the dulness and sameness of your visit.

One thing, however, will make the daily routine more unvaried than ever. Branwell, who used to enliven us, is to leave us in a few days to enter the situation of a private tutor in the neighbourhood of Ulverston. How he will like or settle remains yet to be seen; at present he is full of hope and resolution.

I, who know his variable nature, and his strong turn for active life, dare not be too sanguine. We are as busy as possible preparing for his departure, and shirt-making and collar-stitching fully occupy our time. Friday week I look forward to with impatience; don't change your day. Good-bye, my dear Ellen.

C. BRONTË.

I think it is your turn to scold about bad writing.

P.S.—The bag I was working for you remains just in the state it was four months ago. When you come I'll try to finish it.



## Letter 2

TO ELLEN NUSSEY

October 14th, 1850.

DEAR ELLEN,—I return A.'s letters. She seems quite happy and fully satisfied of her husband's affection. Is this the usual way of spending the honeymoon? To me it seems as if they overdo it; that travelling, and tugging, and fagging about and getting drenched and muddled, by no means harmonises with my notions of happiness; besides, the two meals a day, etc., would do me up. It all reminds me too sharply of the few days I spent in London nearly ten years ago, when I was many a time fit to drop with the fever and faintness resulting from long fasting and excessive fatigue. However, no doubt, a bride can bear such things better than others. I smiled to myself at some passages; she has wondrous faith in her husband's intellectual powers and acquirements. Joe's illusion will soon be over, but Amelia's will not, and therein she is happier than he.

What will be the proper thing for me to do when they come home by way of acknowledging the cards sent me? I suppose I must send my card; didn't you say so?

John Taylor will probably discover that he too wants a wife when he gets to Ropely; the opposite hill will form a convenient prospect. But I will say no more; you know I disapprove jesting and teasing on these matters. Idle words sometimes do unintentional harm.

I have had a letter from Mary lately; she is well, happy, and prosperous—her shop thriving, herself content. I am glad of this. Good-bye, dear Nell. God bless you!

C. BRONTË.

Papa continues *much better*.

## Letter 3

TO CATHERINE WINKWORTH

CORK, July 30th, 1854.

DEAR KATIE,—It was at a little wild spot on the south-west coast of Ireland that your letter reached me. I did not at first recognise the handwriting, and when I saw the signature and afterwards read the full and interesting communication, I was touched;—you are very good, Katie, very thoughtful for others.

Yes! I am married. A month ago this very day (July 27th) I changed my name. The same day we went to Conway; stayed a few days in Wales; then crossed from Holyhead to Dublin. After a short sojourn in the capital we went to the coast. Such a wild rock-bound coast: with such an ocean view as I had not yet seen, and such battling of waves with rocks as I had never imagined!

My husband is not a poet or a poetical man, and one of my grand doubts before marriage was about 'congenial tastes' and so on. The first morning we went out on to the cliffs and saw the Atlantic coming in, all white foam, I did not know whether I should get leave or time to take

the matter in my own way. I did not want to talk, but I *did* want to look and be silent. Having hinted a petition, licence was not refused; covered with a rug to keep off the spray, I was allowed to sit where I chose, and he only interrupted me when he thought I crept too near the edge of the cliff. So far, he is always good in this way, and this protection which does not interfere or pretend, is, I believe, a thousand times better than any half sort of pseudo-sympathy. I will try with God's help to be as indulgent to him whenever indulgence is needed.

We have been to Killarney. I will not describe it a bit. We saw and went through the Gap of Dunloe. A sudden glimpse of a very grim phantom came on us in the Gap. The guide had warned me to alight from my horse, as the path was now very broken and dangerous; I did not feel afraid and declined. We passed the dangerous part, the horse trembled in every limb and slipped once, but did not fall. Soon after, she started and was unruly for a minute; however I kept my seat, my husband went to her head and led her. Suddenly, without any apparent cause, she seemed to go mad—reared, plunged;—I was thrown on the stones right under her. My husband did not see that I had fallen—he still held on: I saw and felt her kick, plunge, trample round me. I had my thoughts about the moment—its consequences, my husband, my father. When my plight was seen, the struggling creature was let loose, and she sprang over me. I was lifted off the stones, neither bruised by the fall nor touched by the mare's hoofs! Of course the only feeling left was gratitude for more sakes than my own.

I go home soon; good-bye, dear Katie. I direct this to Plymouth Grove, not being sure of your address.

C. B. NICHOLLS.

## Letter 4

TO MRS. GASKELL

HAWORTH, *September 30th, '54.*

DEAR MRS. GASKELL,—We all know that it is not precisely advantageous to a really good book to be published piecemeal in a periodical, but still, such a plan has its good side. *North and South* will thus be seen by many into whose hands it would not otherwise fall. What has appeared I like well, and better and better each fresh number; best of all the last (to-day's). The subject seems to me difficult; at first, I groaned over it. If you had any narrowness of views or bitterness of feeling towards the Church or her Clergy, I should groan over it still; but I think I see the ground you are about to take as far as the Church is concerned; not that of attack on her, but of defence of those who conscientiously differ from her, and feel it a duty to leave her fold. Well, it is good ground, but still rugged for the step of Fiction; stony, thorny will it prove at times, I fear. It seems to me you understand well the genius of the North. Where the Southern Lady and the Northern Mechanic are brought into contrast and contact, I think Nature is well respected. Simple, true and good did I think the last number, clear of artificial trammels of style and thought.

C. B.

## APPENDIX VIII

MR. A. B. NICHOLLS AND MR. CARUS WILSON

*From 'Halifax Guardian,' May 23rd, 1857*

## VINDICATION OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

ALTHOUGH we did not insert the letters to which the following refers (having confidence that the late eminent writer, whose memory they sought to darken, was not the woman to pen what she knew to be untrue), we willingly give insertion to the Rev. Mr. Nicholls's vindication of his lost wife's character, which, dear as it will be to him must also be dear to all the readers of her wonderful works:—

*To the Editors of the 'Leeds Mercury.'*

GENTLEMEN,—On Saturday last you published, by request of Mr. W. W. Carus Wilson, an extract from a review, containing, he says, 'a complete answer to the statements regarding his father's charitable institutions.'

The statements referred to are, I presume, the following:—That the unhealthy situation of Cowan Bridge, unwholesome food, and exposure to cold, etc., enfeebled the girls, and predisposed them to disease; that fever broke out among them; that about forty of them suffered from it; that the surgeon, who was called in, condemned the girls' daily food by the expressive action of spitting out a portion of it, which he had taken in order to taste it; that the school was removed to a new situation, and a committee of management appointed.

Now let us examine the 'complete answer,' and see how these charges are disposed of. And first, the reviewer assumes that these statements rest solely on the testimony 'of one who, when but a child of nine, left the establishment'; a reference, however, to the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* will show that this is a *false* assumption. He praises the situation of the school, 'on Mr. Carus Wilson's property, half a mile from Casterton Hall, high and healthy'; but he has not the candour to state that this description applies to the *present* site, and *not to that referred to in 'Jane Eyre.'*

He eulogises Mr. Wilson's liberality, but omits to state that funds are raised from the public for the support of the establishment which Mr. W. W. Carus Wilson modestly calls his 'father's charitable institutions.'

He makes *no mention whatever* of the condemnation of the girls' daily

food by the medical man, of the fever which scourged the school, and the consequent change of site and reformation of the establishment.

But surely the former superintendent, 'whose able letter appeared in a review,' will supply the gentleman's omissions, and in her 'long and complete answer to the assertions in *Jane Eyre*,' make some reference to this eventful period in the existence of 'The Clergy Daughters' School.' She does no such thing; at least as quoted in the review. She eulogises Mr. Wilson; asseverates her own impartiality; refers to her apostasy from her church and expatriation from her country; makes a somewhat erroneous statement respecting Mr. Brontë's family; hazards some conjectures about the intentions of the author of *Jane Eyre*; and lays before us a bill of fare at Cowan Bridge—'Meat, vegetables, and puddings, daily in abundance.' Very good, madam! But what about the *cooking* that spoiled these provisions, boiled the puddings in unclean water, compounded the Saturday's nauseous mess from the fragments accumulated in a dirty larder during the week, and too often sent up the porridge, not merely burnt, but with offensive fragments of other substances discoverable in it?

The Reviewer says: 'The whole of this letter Mrs. Gaskell must have seen, as she quotes one sentence out of it word for word.' Whether Mrs. Gaskell has seen this letter, I do not know; but if the Reviewer will refer to the *Life*, vol. i. page 78, he will find that Mrs. Gaskell quotes from a letter which she had *herself* received from the same lady, who evidently, in both instances, used the same form of expression—identical, however, in only *three* words, 'bright, clever, happy'—in reference to the same child. May I not justly retort the charge of disingenuousness on the Reviewer, who must have known this when he charged Mrs. Gaskell with making a garbled quotation.

*Jane Eyre* was published in 1847; Lowood was almost immediately identified with Cowan Bridge, yet 'the lady, who was superintendent in 1824,' was discreetly silent for more than *seven* years, in fact until the author was laid in her grave. So were Mr. W. W. Carus Wilson and the Reviewer, for aught I know. Their present proceedings are merely an illustration of a very old fable.

To the day of her death 'Curren Bell' maintained that the picture drawn in *Jane Eyre* was on the whole a true picture of Cowan Bridge School, as she knew it by experience: that the institution was subsequently greatly improved she knew and stated in the same work in which she exposed its former mismanagement.

I am told that the Reviewer, referred to in this letter, has with *exquisite taste* and *great charity* alluded to the closing hours of my wife's life, describing them as painful. *Painful* indeed they were, but not in his sense of the term. On this subject I would say to him, 'Who art thou that judgest another? Judge not that ye be not judged. First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.'

Trusting to your sense of justice to give this letter a place in your Saturday's impression, I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

A. B. NICHOLLS.

HAWORTH PARSONAGE, May 20th, 1857.



*From 'Halifax Guardian,' June 6th, 1857*

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

*To the Editor of the 'Halifax Guardian.'*

SIR,—I was aware that the Reviewer had expressed the wish, referred to by Mr. W. Carus Wilson, and I now see that, while inserting all that was favourable to the management of the school, the writer carefully omitted whatever told against it.

Let me, however, thank Mr. Wilson for his last letter. In his former statement all was perfection at Cowan Bridge, now we have the following points *admitted*: That 'during the spring of 1825 there prevailed a low fever, though not an alarming one' (what would *alarm* Mr. W. if the illness of about forty girls failed to do so?); that 'the doctor rather scornfully' condemned the girls' food; that 'thoughtless servants spoiled it'; that there were 'privations'; that the schools were removed to a new site—from what cause Mr. Wilson does not say.

But mark how easily Mr. Wilson disposes of adverse testimony; 'if there *are* any besides (C. Brontë), perhaps a dismissed pupil or teacher.'

Now even at the risk of incurring such a summary dismissal I cannot forbear giving him the following extract from a letter which I have received from a former pupil at Cowan Bridge:—

'On first reading *Jane Eyre* several years ago I recognised immediately the picture there drawn, and was far from considering it any way exaggerated; in fact, I thought at the time, and still think the matter rather understated than otherwise. I suffered so severely from the treatment that I was never in the schoolroom during the last three months I was there, until about a week before I left, and was considered to be far gone in consumption. My mother (whose only child I was) was never informed of my illness, and I might certainly have died there without her being informed of it, had not a severe illness of her own caused her hastily to summon me home. She was so much shocked at my appearance that she refused to allow me to return, though pressed to do so. . . . I attribute my illness to the unhealthy situation of the school, the long walks to church in bad weather (for in winter our feet were often wet during the whole of the service), and the scanty and ill-prepared food. . . . The housekeeper was very dirty with the cooking. I have frequently seen grease swimming on the milk and water we had for breakfast, in consequence of its having been boiled in a greasy copper, and I perfectly remember once being sent for a cup of tea for a teacher, who was ill in bed, and no spoon being at hand, the housekeeper stirred it with her finger, she being engaged in cutting up raw meat at the time. I could give you scores of such instances as these which fell under my own observation. Our food was almost always badly cooked, and besides that we certainly had not enough of it, whatever may be said to the contrary. . . . In a word, the system at Cowan Bridge was a very harsh one, and I was very glad to hear that an improvement took place after the school was removed to Casterton, for it was much needed. I had no

knowledge whatever of Mrs. Nicholls personally, therefore my statement may fairly be considered an impartial one. You are quite welcome to make what use you think proper of this letter.'

If Mr. Wilson's friends had confined themselves to a legitimate review of Mrs. Gaskell's work I should never have written a line on this subject, but when they attacked the dead, and adopted the questionable course of disseminating their vile slander anonymously through the post-office (actually sending a copy to Mr. Brontë), I should indeed have been inexcusable had I allowed their assertions to pass unchallenged.

Mr. W. W. Carus Wilson published a refutation (as he called it) of the assertions in *Jane Eyre*. I pointed out that it was nothing of the sort. His subsequent admissions, with the testimony I have furnished in this letter, more than justify all that was said in that work respecting the management of Cowan Bridge School. To bandy further arguments with Mr. Wilson I have neither time nor inclination; besides I am quite sure you and your readers would soon be as tired of us and our discussions as the poor girls were of their burnt porridge with 'mixture as before.'—Apologising for again trespassing on your space, I am, sir, your obedient servant,  
A. B. NICHOLLS.

HAWORTH PARSONAGE, *June 3rd, 1857.*

P.S.—Will Mr. Wilson give the *maiden* name of the superintendent who 'married the head of a college in America'? For, if she is, as I suspect, *most intimately* acquainted with the 'Miss Scratcherd' of *Jane Eyre*, there is strong reason why she should wish to disparage the testimony of the avenging sister of 'Helen Burns' (Maria Brontë), who was so cruelly treated by that *amiable* lady.

*From 'Halifax Guardian,' June 13th, 1857*

'JANE EYRE' AND THE COWAN BRIDGE SCHOOL

*To the Editor of the 'Halifax Guardian.'*

SIR,—My attention has been called to two letters recently published in your paper, purporting to be rejoinders to the replies of Mr. Wilson to the assailants of Casterton School, and its venerable and excellent founder.

If, as I have been informed, the letters of Mr. Wilson did not appear in your columns, I question the justice and impartiality of allowing the letters of Mr. Nicholls to appear there. Many of your readers see no other paper, and how, I ask, could they come to a just conclusion by perusing the statements of one party only, on the points at issue?

It gives me inexpressible pain to see the repeated attempts made, by the distortion and exaggeration of facts, and what looks very like wilful misrepresentations of character, to disparage a valuable institution, and to cast odium upon a venerated minister of our church, who has spent his

best days in energetic labours in his Master's cause, and for the benefit of the families of his poorer brethren in the ministry.

As an old pupil, both of the school at Cowan Bridge, and at Casterton, I claim to be heard.

Charlotte Brontë was, if I have been correctly informed, a pupil at Cowan Bridge about nine months. I was a pupil there for two years; and subsequently at Casterton for more than seven years; thus my residence extended over a period of more than nine years. You will allow, therefore, that I had more ample opportunities of forming a judgment as to the real character and management of that institution than Charlotte Brontë, and though I do not appear in the attractive character of a novelist, yet, as a clergyman's wife, I trust that my statements may be considered as worthy of credit as those of Charlotte Brontë, her biographer, or her reviewers.

I was one of the victims of that visitation of fever at Cowan Bridge, about which so much has been said, and to this hour I have a vivid recollection of the motherly care and attention I received, and the tender solicitude shown towards me on that trying occasion. Nor have I the slightest reason to think that I was treated better than my fellow-pupils. Nor do I for a moment believe that the fever took its rise from the quantity or quality of the food provided, but was introduced to the school from the village, or by a pupil returning to the school.

As to the extract from the letter of a correspondent of Mr. Nicholls (whose name for reasons best known to himself he withholds), you will please to put my humble testimony in opposition to it. I solemnly affirm that our food was uniformly abundant, good, and generally well-cooked; but no reasonable person could expect that in a large establishment like that, any more than in a private family, a failure in cooking should not sometimes happen.

And as to the pupils walking to the church in wet weather, and sitting the whole time of service with wet and cold feet, I do not say this never occurred; but this I do say, that it was the usual practice for the pupils not to go to church in wet weather, but to have prayers and a sermon at the school; so that this occurrence must have been rare indeed.

I may add that I have four sisters who have been at the same school, one of them at Cowan Bridge, and the other three at Casterton; and after a lengthened pupillage there, in two of those cases of upwards of nine years, they are unanimous in their testimony to the general excellence of the institution and its management, and we feel it difficult to repress our indignation at the unjustifiable attack made upon it and its founder. And as the best proof of my regard for, and confidence in the institution, I am now preparing to send two of my own dear little girls there.

I ought perhaps to apologise for thus asking for space in your paper for the insertion of this letter, but I believe the public will not be unwilling to hear both sides of the question, so that they may be better able to arrive at a just conclusion. And I have a conviction also, that the cause of justice and truth will weigh more powerfully with you than the consideration of a little space in your paper.

I do not think, tenderly as we would deal with the memory of the



dead, that we ought to hesitate to rectify the errors they may have fallen into while living, in cases where the sacred interests of truth are involved ; or to repel the darts they may have aimed, in their productions, at the characters of the living, especially those whose lives have been spent in diffusing benefits widely around them.

The character of the founder of that institution has been cruelly and falsely assailed, as all who know him will readily admit ; but he will think it no dishonour 'to suffer for righteousness' sake.'

It would be almost too much to expect that no injury should be sustained by the institution from the repeated attacks made upon it with such perverse energy ; most thankful therefore should I be could I enlist the sympathies of the wealthy in this locality in its behalf, and add to the number of its subscribers. I know no institution that has a stronger claim to the sympathies and support of the Christian Church.

Trusting to your sense of justice and impartiality to insert this in your next publication,—I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

SARAH BALDWIN.

MYTHOLMROYD PARSONAGE, NEAR HALIFAX, *June 9th, 1857.*

*From 'Halifax Guardian,' July 4th, 1857*

'JANE EYRE' AND COWAN BRIDGE SCHOOL

*To the Editor of the 'Halifax Guardian.'*

SIR,—On returning home after a short absence I have had my attention called to a letter which appeared with the above heading in your paper of the 13th instant. On this letter, with your permission, I shall now make a few remarks.

The writer, after indulging in a little characteristic scolding, very unnecessarily informs your readers that she does not possess the attractions of a novelist ; as a compensation, however, for this deficiency, she announces that she is a clergyman's wife, and *therefore* worthy of credit. Rare logic ! According to which truth must be hereditary, owing, moreover, somewhat of its force to connection.

Mrs. Baldwin says that she has 'had more ample opportunities of forming a judgment on the management of Cowan Bridge School than Charlotte Brontë.' Now, Charlotte Brontë described the institution as she found it. Mrs. Baldwin was not there at the time, consequently she cannot personally know whether the statements in *Jane Eyre* are true or false. Hear the testimony of a lady who *was* at the school with Miss Brontë :—'I would rather see a child of mine in its grave than subjected to the treatment I endured, and which I shall never forget.'

Mrs. Baldwin further states that 'the food was uniformly abundant and good' ; and yet Mr. Shephard, the chaplain, admits that there were grounds for complaint on this head ; and a surgeon, still living in Kirby Lonsdale, having tasted it, pronounced it 'unfit for pigs,' 'to our great delight,' writes an eye-witness.



Mrs. Baldwin, after informing us that she is 'preparing to send two of her own dear little girls' (a first instalment, I presume) to 'the charitable institution' already so liberally patronised by her family, proceeds to do a little congenial business, and with exquisite taste presents a begging box to the Halifax gentry. Surely such a graceful and disinterested appeal cannot be made in vain.

Mrs. Baldwin, evidently a stranger to that delicacy of feeling which causes a lady to shrink from having her name paraded before the public, complains that I have withheld the name of my correspondent, whose letter I quoted in replying to Mr. W. W. C. Wilson. If Mrs. Baldwin will condescend to give me a call, her curiosity shall be gratified, as I have permission to show the lady's card to any one I choose.

With many thanks for your great kindness, and a sincere hope that I shall not have again to recur to this painful subject,—I am, sir, your obliged and obedient servant,

A. B. NICHOLLS.

HAWORTH PARSONAGE, *June 30th*, 1857.

*From 'Halifax Guardian,' July 11th, 1857*

'JANE EYRE' AND THE COWAN BRIDGE SCHOOL

*To the Editor of the 'Halifax Guardian.'*

SIR,—I trust you will allow me the opportunity of making a few observations on the letter of Mr. Nicholls in your paper of the 4th of July, in which he attempts to reply to a letter of mine in your paper of the 13th of June.

Mr. Nicholls's letter is written in a style so coarse and unusual among educated people, that it is quite undeserving of notice, and would have been allowed to pass at once into oblivion, but for one or two mis-statements it contains. The production is little else than a scornful sneer throughout. A sneer is a kind of argument which, while it is the easiest, is also the weakest and worst that can be employed, and is never resorted to when any other is available.

A gentleman who undertakes to lecture others upon logical accuracy, should be careful that his own statements be unimpeachable on this ground; but it is not so in this case. He intimates that because I was not at the school at the identical time with Charlotte Brontë, therefore I cannot know whether the statements in *Jane Eyre* be true or false. Is there no fallacy here? Can he seriously mean that our knowledge of any subject is limited by the range of our personal observation? If so, let me ask, what is the extent of his acquaintance with the subject in dispute, about which he writes with such boldness, and in so peculiar a style? I do not pretend to know by personal observation whether all these statements are true or not; but I have very satisfactory evidence, of a personal nature and of other kinds, that they are not; and especially so to Mr. Wilson, the accusations against whom, and the misrepresentations of whose character are, to my mind, the gravest part of the whole

question. I think I may be allowed to speak with some confidence, because for nearly ten years I knew him intimately, and had full opportunity of observing his religious character, his temper, disposition, and general treatment of the pupils; and it was such as to produce in me, and in the good majority of them, feelings of unaffected love and veneration. This testimony is founded upon nearly ten years' experience. Charlotte Brontë speaks only from personal observation and experience, extending over a period of nine months and when she was a mere child, a little more than nine years old. I went to the school at Cowan Bridge about a year after she left, when, I believe, the state of things was much as during her stay there. I continued there until its removal to Casterton, and remained there some years. The result of my observation and experience I have already given, and am ready to confirm it in the fullest manner.

With your permission, I will now give the testimony of one of the first pupils at Cowan Bridge. 'As a pupil at Cowan Bridge in its first days, I feel it a privilege to be able to bear testimony in direct opposition to Miss Brontë. I could mention many interesting little incidents corroborative of my opposite testimony, calculated to account for the affectionate feeling with which I myself, and my fellow-pupils, regarded the kind Carus Wilson family. I have not read *Jane Eyre*, for I felt it a waste of time to read tales founded on falsehoods; but when I have heard remarks made upon it, and now on the *Memoir*, it has afforded me satisfaction to refute the ungrateful slander cast on Mr. Wilson, and to bear my testimony to the practical consistency of his character, which, with me, gave weight to all his religious instructions. My annual subscription for many years to the school betokens my interest in it; and I now send a little donation as a further proof of my regard for him and it.'

This is one of more than three hundred letters that have been received by Mr. W. W. C. Wilson within the last few weeks, almost all grieving over the assertions made in *Jane Eyre* and in the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, which crush entirely any testimony that can be produced to the contrary.

In the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. i. p. 79, Mellany Hane is spoken of as a great friend of Charlotte Brontë. She is now abroad; but her brother, the incumbent of Sydenham, and his wife, write to say, that they 'never heard her speak otherwise than in the highest terms of the school, and of Mr. Wilson.' This young lady I knew at school, and never on any occasion did I hear from her even a whisper of the occurrences narrated in *Jane Eyre* as having taken place at Cowan Bridge.

The 'Miss Temple' of *Jane Eyre* is exhibited in a most favourable light by Charlotte Brontë herself, and is spoken of in highly eulogistic terms by the authoress of the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*. The following is from a clergyman, the husband of the lady who is represented under the name of Miss Temple, and who died only last year. 'Often,' he says, 'have I heard my late dear wife speak of her sojourn at Cowan Bridge. I never heard her speak otherwise than in terms of admiration at Mr. Carus Wilson's personal sacrifices, and of the parental affection he manifested towards the pupils. Of the food and treatment of the children she always spoke in terms of general approval. I have heard

her allude to some unfortunate cook, who used at times to spoil the food, but she said she was soon dismissed.' This testimony from such a quarter is strong indeed.

Mr. Nicholls endeavours to point out a discrepancy between Mr. Shephard's admission and my statement relative to the food; here he is again unfortunate and unsuccessful. I said, 'the food was uniformly abundant and good,' and he asserts that Mr. Shephard admits that there was ground for complaint on this head. He admits that the ground of complaint was an occasional failure in the cooking, and nothing more; which nobody wishes to deny.

The statement of Mr. Nicholls relating to the surgeon is suspicious, and otherwise worthless as evidence. It has been denied that the surgeon acted in the manner stated; if he did, and rejected the food with the remark he is said to have made, he did it in his usual off-hand, quick, and somewhat thoughtless manner; and having been a patient of his, I well understand what degree of importance to attach to such an occurrence. if, indeed, it took place at all.

Mr. Nicholls, with singular politeness, goes on to say, that 'Mrs. Baldwin is evidently a stranger to that delicacy of feeling which causes a lady to shrink from having her name paraded before the public.' I cheerfully leave it to your readers, and to those who have considered Mr. Nicholls's letter, to decide where the lack of delicacy of feeling exists. I affixed my name to my letter to show that I wrote in good faith, and that I was willing to substantiate what I had said. Anonymous communications are generally open to suspicion. I have the satisfaction of knowing that my letter has not been without effect in quarters where an anonymous communication would have been unnoticed. And does not this gentleman see that his censure, if I be amenable to it, falls in quarters where it must give even himself pain?

I have as little inclination as Mr. Nicholls to continue the correspondence, especially as it is conducted by himself in defiance of all the rules of courtesy and propriety. Having borne my humble, but most conscientious, testimony in this matter on the side of truth and justice, I am so far satisfied. With many thanks for your kind indulgence,—  
I am, sir, your obedient servant,

SARAH BALDWIN.

MYTHOLMROYD PARSONAGE, *July 8th, 1857.*

*From 'Halifax Guardian,' July 18th 1857*

THE COWAN BRIDGE SCHOOL

*To the Editor of the 'Halifax Guardian.'*

SIR,—I don't wish to make any defence for Mrs. Baldwin. Your readers will, I am sure, agree with me, that she is *quite* able to take care of herself: neither do I wish to notice the strain of Mr. Nicholls's letter, at which many have expressed to me (to use the lightest term) their astonishment; but I hope I may now be able to close this controversy by



saying, that in a correspondence I have had with Mrs. Gaskell, I have found her most willing to rectify the injury she has done to my father and his institutions, and I believe her third edition will be a work which none can cavil at, but all extol.

I gladly do her justice in saying that I am sure she only desires to elicit truth. I do think she is more to blame than C. Brontë, for having too much endorsed as facts the exaggerated fictions of *Jane Eyre*.

C. Brontë's wonderful writings being but novels, we must allow her gifted pen more licence.

I have only met with one remark of hers on the subject that comes before the public otherwise than under the garb of fiction, and it is certainly a sweeping statement, severely commented on by two leading London reviews for this month. It appears in a letter from her to a friend, in the 2nd vol. of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life*, where she says that 'fever yearly decimated the pupils at Cowan Bridge.' For the whole thirty-five years the school has been in existence there have been but two attacks of fever, which carried off but six pupils.

It has been said that the statements of pupils who were not at school with C. Brontë are of no avail. But I have seen the testimony of teachers and pupils who were *with* her, and those who followed her, as did Mrs. Baldwin (who finds from her father now that she was at Cowan Bridge for a much longer period than she stated in her first letter), would surely have heard of the horrors depicted in *Jane Eyre*, if they had had any reality. And as regards my father's conduct towards the pupils, those at Casterton, as well as Cowan Bridge, can give evidence about that. I have the testimony of teachers and pupils who were at the school both before and after C. Brontë, that white bread was given to the girls, not 'only brown,' as Mr. Nicholls's correspondent tells us; and to the same informant I have my father's declaration that no 'doctor drove over to his residence with a complaint about the food.'

As regards the 'Miss Scratcherd,' several have said she was firm, but kind, and very much liked.

I am ready to give your readers the addresses of any of my correspondents, and I only wish they could read a tithe of the letters I have had from old pupils.

The testimony Mrs. Baldwin gives in her last letter is from Miss Frizell, residing with the Hon. J. Tollemache, M.P., Ham House, Surrey, and the 'Miss Temple's' husband, the Rev. J. Connor, Melton Mowbray.

Shortly after C. Brontë left Cowan Bridge, which has been designated as a second Dotheboys' Hall (though now the whole tone of the reviews and magazines for this month has been turned towards the truth, and I have seen more than a dozen), the late Bishop of London visited the school with Mrs. Blanfield, and after an examination of the classes, and a careful inspection of the whole establishment, observed to my father, that 'if it should please God to deprive his daughters of their parents, he knew no institution where he could more desire them to be placed.'

I do trust that this letter may close this controversy.—Yours,

W. W. CARUS WILSON.



*From 'Halifax Guardian,' July 18th, 1857*

'JANE EYRE' AND THE COWAN BRIDGE SCHOOL

*To the Editor of the 'Halifax Guardian.'*

SIR,—I regret to find that Mrs. Baldwin takes such strong exception to my last letter, but if she indulges in charges of 'distortion and exaggeration of facts and wilful misrepresentation,' she must not feel surprised if she be answered in a manner less gentle than one would wish to use in replying to a lady.

She cannot, it seems, perceive the fallacy in her argument, and yet it is very plain. She assumes that because the management was good in *her* time, it must have been so *always*. With equal correctness might she argue that because she is *now* in a position to 'send two of her dear little girls' to 'my father's charitable institution,' she has been *always* in a similar interesting situation. For the statements I have made I have produced proof. Mr. Wilson's friends have not, that I am aware of, produced the testimony of a single pupil who was at the institution with Charlotte Brontë. Mr. W. W. Carus Wilson has, indeed, quoted a letter written, he said, by 'the lady who was *superintendent* in 1824,' but will it be believed that the letter was not written by Miss Evans, the superintendent or principal teacher, at all, but by a Miss Andrews (one of the characters in *Jane Eyre*, and therefore an interested party), who, I am told, combined the office of teacher with that of '*superintendent of rooms*,' a situation, as far as I can learn, somewhat analogous to that of an upper housemaid. And yet the man, who acts thus disingenuously, to use the mildest term, accuses others of lying, slander, calumny, etc.

Mrs. Baldwin says she went to Cowan Bridge about a year after Miss Brontë left it. This can hardly be so, for in that case she must have been *sixteen* years at school instead of nine, as she says herself. This, however, is of little consequence. I merely wish to point out the inconsistency. But contrast the testimony of a lady who *did* go to the school at that time.

The following extract is from a letter addressed to me by her husband, a clergyman:—'Feeling interested, in common with thousands, in the fame of C. Brontë, and indignant at the aspersions cast on her veracity, I think it may not be disagreeable to you to receive from an independent source a statement confirmatory in some respects of the account of the Clergy Daughters' School given by your late lamented wife.

'My own wife and one of her sisters (E.) were educated at Cowan Bridge, entering shortly after Miss Brontë left, and remaining there five years. At the time of their entrance the school was considered to be in a course of progressive improvement, and my wife makes no complaint of dirt, but her account of the food supplied during the early part of her residence is very *unfavourable* in respect to the *quantity* and *quality*. The breakfast consisted of ill-made porridge, without bread. Many girls from the southern counties, unused to such food at home, could not eat it, and for six months my wife and her sister E. had no breakfast what-

ever. On one occasion it was observed that E. was not taking her porridge. She was required to eat it. Attempting to do so, her stomach rejected it, upon which she was treated, not to a meal of bread or other wholesome food, but to a *strong dose of senna tea*.

'The dinner was sufficient, but not good. . . . The evening meal consisted of a cup of milk and water, and *one small piece of bread, not weighing two ounces*.

'Many of the girls being thus always hungry, there were continual attempts to procure bread clandestinely. This was brought to light by the following incident. It was usual for each pupil to repeat on Sunday morning a text of her own choice; and one, who had, I believe, been punished for stealing bread, repeated in her turn the verse which declares that men do not despise a thief who steals bread to satisfy his hunger. This girl died shortly after of consumption.

'My own wife, on her return home for the first vacation, was considered by her family to be half starved, and her brother, a medical man, has told me, that in his opinion, her health suffered for years from the consequences of insufficient nourishment.'

The writer goes on to say that 'Eventually there was little cause for complaint with respect to the food supplied.'

My sole desire in this controversy has been to defend the dead from the aspersions cast on her by interested individuals. Against the Clergy Daughters' School, as at present conducted, the author of *Jane Eyre* has not written a line, nor have I. The management is, I am told, unexceptionable; indeed, unless my memory deceive me, the only disparaging remarks I have ever heard made respecting it were by Mrs. Baldwin's own father, on the occasion of the removal of one of his daughters.—I am, sir, your much obliged and obedient servant,

A. B. NICHOLLS.

HAWORTH PARSONAGE, *July 15th, 1857.*

*From 'Halifax Guardian,' August 1st, 1857*

THE COWAN BRIDGE SCHOOL CONTROVERSY

*To the Readers of the 'Halifax Guardian.'*

It will excite but little surprise that I should feel dissatisfied at the manner in which the editor of the *Halifax Guardian* endeavoured to sum up and dispose of this case in last Saturday's paper. I felt that I was fairly entitled to the opportunity of correcting one or two very erroneous statements respecting myself and my father, whose esteem for Mr. Wilson is so very great, and his appreciation of his labours, whether as it regards his schools or the church at large, is unqualified. It was from no such mean motives as Mr. Nicholls thought proper to assert that I wrote in defence of the school; it was, as I said in my first letter, and again repeat, to repel the calumnious darts so unjustly aimed at its benevolent founder, and having been so long and intimately acquainted with the subject in dispute, I could speak confidently of the different tone and

spirit pervading the whole establishment to that which had been represented—more especially as it regards Mr. Wilson's character, whose warmth of heart and Christian benevolence led him to devise and carry on so successfully this, and other labours of love. It was due also to Mr. W. W. C. Wilson to allow him to rebut the charge of disingenuousness so unjustifiably alleged against him. And also to give the lady referred to as 'E.' in Mr. Nicholls's letter the opportunity of contradicting, in her own words, the substance of the letter of his correspondent. I will now take the liberty of setting these matters in their true light, and then, as far as I am concerned, terminate this controversy, unless something very extraordinary should call for further contradiction and remark.

I must take a decided exception to the summing-up of the editor upon the whole question. He assumes the truth of one of the principal points in dispute. He says, 'There were certain hardships and irregularities at the Cowan Bridge School when Miss Brontë was there, which were remedied as soon as they became known to its reverend and benevolent promoter.' This is neither proved nor admitted. The only thing proved (which was never denied) was, that there was a cook at the school for a few weeks whose habits of cleanliness were certainly not satisfactory.

Assertions, unfavourable in their nature, have been made by two or three anonymous correspondents, whose names we cannot learn. In opposition to this we have the testimony of at least three hundred pupils and others, who honourably endorse their testimony with their names. Who, with any pretensions to candour of mind, can resist such overwhelming evidence? I have but little doubt that some persons are very cruelly playing upon Mr. Nicholls's credulity. This will perhaps appear from the following letter by the lady designated as 'E.' in his extract. This lady I may say is Mrs. Smith, of Chetwode Parsonage, Bucks; she and her sisters were daughters of a highly-esteemed clergyman, vicar of Olney, a memoir of whom I have now lying on my table; he was distinguished for the tenderness and strength of his affection for his children; and had their treatment been such as represented, he would not have suffered them to remain a single day at the school. And when he wished to place his daughters at a school nearer home, at their own request they remained at Cowan Bridge.

The letter of 'E.,' which I wish the editor had given last week, was as follows:—

'SIR,—Your paper of the 18th inst. has been sent to me, and my attention directed to a letter from the Rev. A. B. Nicholls, containing statements referring to myself. As the "E." of that letter, I beg to say that they were sent without my knowledge, and are unjustly used to support convictions opposed to my own. I believe that the mixture of fact and fiction in the description of Cowan Bridge in *Jane Eyre* conveys to the reader a *general idea opposed to the truth*. I look back on the five years I passed there with great thankfulness, and reckon my school-days amongst the happiest of my life. With respect to the porridge, I would just say that when Mr. Wilson was informed of my dislike to it, he *at once* gave orders for my having bread and milk. He is not responsible for the remedy for a dainty appetite detailed by Mr. Nicholls's correspondent; and



had the *superintendent* been in the house, it would not have been administered. The incident happened during a vacation, and is, I believe, exaggerated, for I have no recollection of the most offensive part of the story. I had always plenty of food after I was allowed bread and milk for breakfast; and had I liked oatmeal porridge, as Mr. Wilson's own children did, I should have had enough from the first. You will allow me to add that I am "interested" in this controversy only by the claims of justice and gratitude.—Yours, etc.,  
E.

'P.S.—Mr. Nicholls has fallen into a mistake in saying that it was a clergyman who sent him his information.'

This letter needs no comment. I must assure Mr. Nicholls that he never heard from my father anything of a disparaging nature with regard to the school. His imagination, not his memory, supplies him with this impression. My father's approbation of the school is unqualified, and his esteem for Mr. Wilson very high.

Mr. Nicholls's misapprehension as to the duration of my residence at the school is easily rectified. The only uncertainty in my mind was the date of the removal of the school from Cowan Bridge to Casterton; it was at a later period than I thought; so that I was at Cowan Bridge a longer, and at Casterton a shorter, period than I at first stated. This, it will be perceived, adds some strength to my former testimony. Mr. Nicholls's charge of disingenuousness against Mr. W. W. C. Wilson is entirely unfounded. That gentleman quoted a letter written by the superintendent in 1824; that superintendent *was* Miss Andrews, who was also head-teacher. After Miss Evans became superintendent, Miss A. still retained the office of teacher, and was never 'superintendent of rooms.'

I am sorry that, after admitting the excellence and utility of the institution, he should still point the finger of scorn at it, and so frequently and unnecessarily reproduce the expression of Mr. W. W. C. Wilson, 'My father's charitable institution.' He might with about equal truth apply the expression 'Charitable institution' to the Universities or any other endowed public scholastic institution. It matters but little whether an institution be sustained by the testamentary bequests and donations of past ages, or the donations of the present; as to principle, they stand pretty much on the same ground.

All honour (little as he seeks it) is due to Mr. Wilson for his efforts in founding that institution; and for his self-sacrifice and liberality, and unwearied exertions, in sustaining it, in conjunction with the liberal co-operation of others. And look at the superior education imparted to the pupils there, upon comparatively low terms. The system of instruction comprehends history, the use of the globes, grammar, writing, arithmetic, French, Latin, needlework, and calisthenics. To which are added as accomplishments, and for which somewhat higher terms are paid, music, drawing, German, Italian, and the organ.

I think every right-minded person, uninfluenced by prejudice, must hesitate to disparage, or in any way to impair, the stability of such an institution, one that has proved so great and extensive a blessing.

In dismissing, as I hope finally, this subject, I must observe that in what I have said I have been influenced only by a regard for justice and truth,



and of gratitude to Mr. Wilson. The school and Mr. Wilson were misrepresented and misunderstood, and no voice lifted up here in defence. Many of my former fellow-pupils in other parts of the country had stood forward with their favourable testimony. I felt constrained to use my feeble powers and influence in the same cause. I feel thankful that I have done so, and thus been enabled to discharge in some small degree the debt of gratitude I, in common with the hundreds, owe to the excellent and benevolent founder of the school.

Should any one wish for further information relative to the school and its management, or pamphlets relating thereto, the same may be obtained free of cost upon application to W. W. C. Wilson, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.

SARAH BALDWIN.

MYTHOLMROYD PARSONAGE, July 29th, 1857.

*From 'Halifax Guardian,' August 8th, 1857*

#### THE COWAN BRIDGE CONTROVERSY

*To the Editor of the 'Halifax Guardian.'*

SIR,—As you truly said in your summing up, this controversy 'lies in a small space.' The question, stripped of extraneous matter, is simply this: What was the state of the school *during the time that Miss Brontë was there?*

She and others described the treatment as harsh; the food as indifferently and insufficient. Up started Mrs. Baldwin, and, asserting her own superior means of information, said in effect: Don't believe a word of it; hear me. I went to Cowan Bridge *seven years* (according to Mr. Wilson's date) *after C. Brontë left*, and 'I solemnly affirm that the food was uniformly abundant and good.' I pointed out to her that she could not personally know whether the statements were true or not, because she was not at 'my father's charitable institution' at the time referred to. She then said: '*I do not pretend to know by personal observation whether the statements are true or not.*' I went to the school about *a year after she left*, when, *I believe*, the state of things was *much as* during her stay.' How conclusive! But Mr. Wilson has '300 testimonials' in his favour—he may have 500—and all just as worthless as Mrs. Baldwin's, unless proved to have been written by pupils who were at school *with* Miss Brontë, which has not been done in a single instance. You will observe that 'E.' admits that she was treated as described by my correspondent; and Mrs. Baldwin does not deny that the girls were driven by hunger to steal bread.

Miss Andrews (identified in Mr. Shephard's pamphlet as the '*amiable* Miss Scratcherd' of *Jane Eyre*) was an under-teacher, and not superintendent, when Miss Brontë was at Cowan Bridge.

I *did* hear, and in this house, Mrs. Baldwin's father speak disparagingly of the management on the occasion of the removal of his youngest daughter from the institution.

Of Rev. C. Wilson I know nothing personally. I would only say that I have heard him spoken of by clergymen, who agree with him in sentiment, in terms very different from those employed by Mrs. Baldwin.

And now, sir, I have done with this subject. I have discharged a painful but necessary duty. Henceforth Charlotte Brontë's assailant may growl and snarl over her grave undisturbed by me.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

A. B. NICHOLS.

HAWORTH PARSONAGE, *August 5th*, 1857.



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